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Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

California-Russian Emigré Series

Lialia Andreevna Sharov

LIFE IN SIBERIA AND MANCHURIA, 1898-1922

A Memoir  
completed in Los Angeles, California  
ca. 1960



## PREFACE

The Russian-Americans, although numerically a small proportion of the population, have for long been a conspicuous and picturesque element in the cosmopolitan make-up of the San Francisco Bay Area. Some came here prior to the Russian Revolution, but the majority were refugees from the Revolution of 1917 who came to California through Siberia and the Orient. Recognizing the historical value of preserving the reminiscences of these Russian refugees, in the spring of 1958 Dr. Richard A. Pierce, author of Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917, (U.C. Press, Spring 1960) then a research historian at the University working on the history of the Communist Party in Central Asia, made the following proposal to Professor Charles Jelavich, chairman of the Center for Slavic Studies:

I would like to start on the Berkeley campus, under the auspices of the Center for Slavic Studies, an oral history project to collect and preserve the recollections of members of the Russian colony of the Bay Region. We have in this area the second largest community of Russian refugees in the U.S., some 30,000 in San Francisco alone. These represent an invaluable and up to now almost entirely neglected source of historical information concerning life in Russia before 1917, the February and October Revolutions, the Civil War of 1918-1921, the Allied intervention in Siberia, the Soviet period; of the exile communities of Harbin, Shanghai, Prague, Paris, San Francisco, etc.; and of the phases in the integration of this minority into American life.

The proposed series of tape-recorded interviews, as a part of the Regional Oral History Office of the University of California Library, was begun in September 1958 under the direction of Professor Jelavich and with the assistance of Professor Nicholas V. Riasanovsky of the Department of History. To date, the interviews listed below have been completed in several series. Each interview lasted a number of sessions, which were transcribed and, if necessary, translated. Each was edited by the interviewer and the interviewee, and then typed and bound. An interview by Professor R. A. Pierce with the late Professor Gleb Struve, still being edited, will constitute a fifth series.

Funding for the California Russian Emigré Series has come from several sources. First supported by the General Library, it was in the second and third series supported by the Center for Slavic and Near Eastern Studies. The fourth series, begun in 1979, received funding from the L. J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation.

In addition to the completed oral histories, other Russian emigré materials have been acquired as a result of the interviewing program.



An interview begun with Professor Nicholas T. Mirov was expanded by Professor Mirov and published as The Road I Came, The Memoirs of a Russian-American Forester (The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario, 1978).

Several manuscripts were donated to Professor Pierce by emigrés who had already written or dictated their memoirs. These include:

Lialia Andreevna Sharov, Life in Siberia and Manchuria, 1898-1922, 296 pages. Completed in Los Angeles, California, ca. 1960.

Professor Ivan Stenbock-Fermor, Memoirs of Life in Old Russia, World War I, Revolution, and in Emigration, 1112 pages. Completed in Palo Alto, California, 1976.

Professor Alex Albov, Recollections of Pre-Revolutionary Russia, the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the Balkans in the 1930's and Service in the Vlasov Army in World War II, 550 pages. Dictated on tape, transcribed by Professor Pierce.

These manuscripts will be made a part of the Russian emigré collection of The Bancroft Library.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons who have contributed to the development of the West. The Office is under the administrative supervision of Professor James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library.

Willa K. Baum, Head  
Regional Oral History Office

15 April 1986  
Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library  
University of California  
Berkeley, California 94709



## PROLOGUE

"There must be reason why the Lord  
Made me a witness of these years  
And granted me a knowledge of  
The written word".

Translation from "Boris Godounoff"  
by Pushkin

This is the last stage of my life - the age of retirement. Standing on the threshold of senility I watch the rapid decline of the setting sun and <sup>it's</sup> ~~the~~ gleaming reflection on the blue Pacific. <sup>while</sup> Observing this golden path I had often thought that when the time for my departure <sup>came</sup> ~~would come~~, and my vision grew dim, I would find a friendly firm hand in the darkness to lead me along this shiny way to the world of no return. Now, when the ultimate goal of life is near, I realize that before I can seek the guiding hand of Jesus I must look back and (see what kind of mark I shall leave behind me on this earth) <sup>∞</sup> (trace the wake I leave behind me).

Born in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century I was cast out of the normal channel of life into a turbulent river with many rapids. My life became a continuous adventure - a book of lessons.

I lived through war and revolution, prison and illness. I faced the depression; worked my way through university; was a physicist for the United States government ~~and~~ a space technology research engineer in United States industry. I was a pioneer in the development of space rockets.





Now I am on the brink of a new experience - retirement.

While I was writing this the sun sank below the horizon. The last rays fired the sky and painted the clouds, casting pink and gold shadows on the dark blue ocean. The sky looks awe inspiring and forbidding.

It is time to end my meditations. Tomorrow I shall start on my biography - my true confession.



THE EARLY YEARS

Introduction

In the year 1898 (the time of my arrival on this planet) my father who was a forestry expert, was appointed to a government post in the Far East. The Trans-Siberian railway had not been completed and the best way to reach Vladivostock was by ship via India. This journey took several weeks at best, and sometimes lasted months. Moreover India was considered an unhealthy place, especially for babies.

Mother was only twenty one and had three little girls. Nina - three years old, Katie - two, and myself - six weeks old. Considering all the circumstances, she hastily decided that it would be best to leave Katie and me with her parents.

Naturally I do not remember my first meeting with grandfather, an old cavalry general. Yet this incident had been described to me so often by my grandmother over the years, that I can almost see grandfather bending over my cradle. I can almost hear him saying "Sophia Michaelovna, how can Marguerite go all the way to China leaving her babies with us? How can a mother part from her children? Of course Katie is a beauty. Her cheeks are the colour of ripe peaches, her hair is a mass of gold, her eyes are just as blue as the unclouded sky, anybody would love a child like that. Now look at this over-baked apple. Six weeks old, not a hair on ~~her~~ her head,

*Alia*



dark slanting Asiatic eyes. Nobody will ever be attracted by such a baby!"

He bent a little closer to me and continued with tenderness "Do not worry my jewel, you will be my special pal. We will love, cherish and protect you as long as we live. Won't we Sophia Michaelovna?".

Grandmother replied "Of course we will, Michael Nicholaevitch. They are our children now, the joy of our life". Then she repeated his words "We will love, cherish and protect ~~them~~ <sup>you</sup> as long as we live".

Thus began my happy childhood.

We lived in a small city called Simbirsk, situated on a high bank of the Volga. The slope to the river was covered with orchards. There was at least one church in each city block. All of these churches had either three or five turrets with ~~golden~~ or blue cupolas, each surmounted by a golden cross.

My first impression of life was music and sunshine. I dropped off to sleep at night and awoke in the morning to the chime of church bells. I saw the cupolas and golden crosses from every window. In winter the sunlight reflected off the ~~cupolas~~ <sup>domes</sup> and ~~crosses~~ made the snow glisten like gems. In summer the scattered ~~beams of the sun~~ <sup>sunbeams</sup> intensified the colours of the flowers and glittered in pools of water. When it rained the drops of water on the crosses looked like pearls.

There were no shadows in my early childhood.



Although this period of life is faint in my memory; it left deep roots and strongly affected my character and psychological development. Therefore I shall try to reconstruct it from the few incidents I can remember and from the characteristics of my grand parents - their way of life and their traditions.





The Home of My Grandparents

Vaguely I remember the large oak table and the carved oak chairs in the center of the dining room; the heavy double doors across the hallway leading into the ballroom. We had our Christmas tree there.

I clearly see our white nursery. A row of richly coloured paintings on the walls illustrating fairy tales, and the shelves of story books; the miniature furniture, the rocking-horse and the toys scattered all over the floor.

Next in my memory is grandmother's sitting room. Light green wallpaper, the oriental rug on the floor and the Napoleon style furniture.

Particularly clearly I recall my grandfather's library. The full size portraits of Alexander III and Nicholas II in golden frames hanging on the walls and the tiger skin rug on the floor. In the left hand corner of the room stood an army drum three feet in diameter. A leather covered chair was in front of a large mahogany desk. On the right hand corner of the desk stood a photograph of the royal family, next to one of Katie and me. On the desk, protected by glass lay an invitation to dinner at the palace. It was in shades of gold and brown with the double headed eagle at the top and the emperor's signature at the bottom. An inkwell made of carved stone was placed at the center of the desk and a galloping horse of cast iron stood



to the left. It was a gift from the regiment.

I loved grandfather's library and every piece in it.

Next to the library was a circular staircase leading to a glass tower overlooking the Volga and the approaching ships.

In the eastern corner of every room in the house hung icons in their gold and silver frames. Votive lights of coloured glass were placed before each icon. Each day at twilight these were lit. The twinkle of the small lights and the scent of burning incense created a mysterious warm atmosphere in the house.

At this time of day we always sat in grandmother's sittingroom listening to <sup>Tales</sup> ~~the~~ fairy stories ~~we read~~. As we grew older these were gradually replaced by folktales, legends and other stories.

Our household included the cook - Natasha, the maid - Masha, our nurse Undina and three orderlies from grandfather's regiment - Peter, John and Michael.

Masha took care of grandmother's bedroom, served at the table and answered the front door bell.

Undina, of course, took care of Katie and me and our nursery.

Peter and John were under Michael's supervision. They kept the house clean and attended to the heating. Every room had two stoves, built into the double inner walls of



of the house. Logs were put into these stoves through a fire door. When they had burnt away and only red hot coals remained the doors were hermetically shut. During the winter the fires had to be built both morning and evening, so that red-hot coals remained in the stoves continuously.

Michael was grandfather's personal orderly, assigned to him during his last war in Asia. Every evening Michael took off grandfather's boots; he personally took care of grandfather's bedroom and the library.

Michael also took care of the votive lights and lamps.

There was no electricity in the city at that time - coal oil lamps were used. Each room had a central lamp hanging from the ceiling, at least two wall lamps, and lamps standing on almost every table. All of them were artistically designed and served as ornaments as well.

Each morning Michael cleaned the lamps and filled them with coal oil so that there would be no odor and they would shine brightly. Michael was very proud of taking care of "the light". After all the votive lights had been lit and complete darkness enveloped the house outside, Michael would light the lamps and say - "Let there be light and there was light".

The mysterious atmosphere of the house would fade away and gaiety would take its place. The dining room would be brightly illuminated and the boiling samovar would be brought in. Grunka, the old cat who always slept on grand



mother's couch, would stretch herself and leave for the kitchen to have her meal. Old Medor, the dog, would run into the house, press his cold nose against my warm hands, lick Katie's fingers, rub himself against grandmother's legs and disappear in search of grandfather.

Grandfather found Medor as a pup during his last war, nursed him through battles and brought him home. Medor lived in the kitchen. In the morning and at night Medor would come into the house to greet the family and to receive a few tid-bits from the table.

Two more members of the family completed our household, a young cow - Mashka and an old horse - Martishka. Mashka was bought especially for Katie and me, so that we could always have fresh milk from the same cow fed a special diet.

Martishka was grandfather's horse and a great friend of Medor. At the time of my acquaintance with Martishka she was over twenty five years old and retired. In the summer she was sent out to pasture every day. During the winter she was kept in the stable and taken for a walk regularly. Every day grandfather visited Martishka and would frequently take Katie and me with him. He would let us pat Martishka's nose and give her sugar. Then he would say:-

"Martishka is old now, but she used to be a good soldier. She saved my life many times. Yes, she was as good as any soldier. Never forget an old soldier, girls. He risked his life for you. Always remember that a soldier is





your brother because you are my children and soldiers are also my children. If you are ever in trouble or in need, always go to a soldier, he will always help and protect you. Never, never forget that soldiers are your brothers.

You see, soldiers are here to protect the Emperor and to protect Russia. As long as the Emperor is safe, Russia is safe and there is nothing to fear".

I thought that as long as grandfather was there the Emperor and Russia were safe and there was certainly nothing to fear.



In this warm atmosphere of love and beauty my life flowed uninterruptedly. Without realizing it, I grew and learned. I believe my education started on the first day of my arrival at the home of my grandparents.

I spoke two languages fluently - Russian and French. A young French girl came every morning to play with Katie and me. Frequently she brought her niece of about our age and we all sang French songs and acted out French rhymes. We spoke Russian with our grandfather and French with our grandmother except when she told us fairytales and during our evening prayers.

Through the prayers I learned that God was our Father in heaven and the Tzar our father on earth, anointed by God protecting Russia and the Russian people. I clearly remember these evening prayers. The semi-darkness of the room illuminated only by the blue votive light in front of the icon of The Virgin Mary and Infant Jesus. The church bells calling the people to the evening service. Katie and I kneeling on our beds repeating the prayers after our grandmother.

Our prayers always began with the first line of the Russian national anthem "God save the Tzar" and ended by asking for the blessing of everyone we loved including Medor and Grunka. Then grandmother would tuck us in our beds and bless us. Grandfather would come in to bless us also. As he kissed me goodnight, I would be floating off into the world of dreams. The angels would be hovering over my bed and I would be ready to explore the dark unknown forest, see the prince riding on a grey wolf,



~~of the~~ <sup>on the</sup> Sleeping Beauty in her crystal coffin. I would be ready to face the ugly witch because grandfather's arms were around me, and as he kissed my forehead his beard tickled my nose so that I knew he was there.

Through the celebration of Christmas I learned of Jesus. However, it is not the Christmas tree in all its richness, nor the beautiful gifts under it, that are engraved on my memory. It is the spirit of joy that was transmitted to me by the peasant boys who came to our home on Christmas morning singing "Glory to God".

On Christmas Eve grandfather would tell us the story of Christmas. In the darkness of the night we watched for the Nativity Star while the Christmas tree was being lit in the ballroom. Through the night, in my dream, I flew beside the Star of Bethlehem, saw the Holy Infant in the stable and the shepherds with their lambs kneeling at His side.

I woke to a frosty, bright Christmas morning with fresh snow on the ground. The crosses glittered in the sun and the Christmas chimes of the church bells spread through the air.

Seven shabbily dressed boys - about ten years old - with down at heel snow boots came to our house. Their turned up noses and pitcher ears were red with cold. Clutching their caps and crossing themselves, they bowed to the right corner of the room where the icons hung, then to the icon of the church bells began to sing:- "Glory to Thee our Lord" Grandfather and Michael joined them - "Glory to Thee our Lord, Thou has brought the light of wisdom to the world, the wise



Men were led to Thee by a star from the East. The sun of truth bows to Thee. Glory to Thee our Lord! Glory !"

To me these were not the village children from across the river, but the shepherds from Bethlehem come to let us know that Jesus Christ was born.

At the end of the hymn the boys turned towards us - their freckled faces smiling, their blue eyes shining with joy - and said in chorus:-

"Jesus is born, General. Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" A wave of happiness suddenly passed over me and I yelled as loudly as I could "Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" jumping into grandfather's arms. At that time I did not realize that in every house in Russia, groups of boys were singing "Glory to God" on Christmas morning, that the church bells were ringing not only over the town of Simbirsk, but over the entire country of Russia, penetrating into every distant corner. At that time, I did not know that because of Greek Orthodoxy these voices and sounds spread through the entire nation in a continuous joyful wave.

This effect had been built up during Christmas eve by means of the church service and fast (~~fast~~) (On the day before Christmas, Russians do not eat until the appearance of the evening star); by means of the chiming bells and the wait for the nativity star. The climax was reached on Christmas morning when groups of boys started to sing "Glory to God". A continuous joyful wave, spreading from person to person, enveloped the nation and united all the people of Russia - rich and poor, old





and young - in ~~axja~~ the same joyousness. The gifts, the Christmas trees and the parties were the manifestations of their mood, not the cause of it.

As long as I lived in Russia, I always waited for the boys to come on Christmas morning to sing "Glory to God", because for me the significance of Christmas was in that moment of joy.



The first great change in my life took place in 1905 when I was seven yearsold.

By this time I had learned that there were principles to live by and laws to obey. The rules were simple:- be honest, be brave and place your trust in God. Greediness and cowardice are to be ashamed of - for they are the core of all evil. Never take advantage of another's misfortune. Never hurt any one who is smaller than you or unable to defend himself. These principles were stressed at every opportunity until they became a part of me.

It was the year of the Russo-Japanese war.

Father was on the staff of the Chinese Eastern Railway Company and lived in Harbin, Manchuria. Early in 1905, after the surrender of Port Arthur to the Japanese, he decided to evacuate his family to Simbirsk for the duration of the war.

Mother now had two more baby girls - Natasha and Tania five and three years old respectively, and a boy Serge - two years old.

It took mother about three months to reach Simbirsk by the one track Siberian Railway which had not yet been completed. There was no line around Lake Baikal. Mother was accompanied by a nurse called Dasha to help look after the youngsters. Our oldest sister, Nina, was ten years old. She was very self-reliant and even helped with the children.

Very soon after their arrival grandfather became seriously ill. The doctor visited him twice a day. Two trained nurses stayed day and night.

Grandmother worried - the children were too noisy, the house too crowded.



Early in May mother rented a large house on an old estate from our friends and moved her family to the country. She took Dasha and Undina with her and also hired a cook, a maid and two handy men.

Katie wanted to be with Nina and left with mother and the children.

Grandfather said that I should stay at home until the household in the country was fully settled in.

My bed was moved into grandmother's bedroom.

The odor of medicine permeated the house. Grandfather was getting worse.

A week later mother returned from the country and suggested that I go there to be with the other children.

The estate was about twenty five miles from Sibirsk and could only be reached by horse.

On mother's instructions, a coachman who was returning to the estate stopped at our house to pick me up. He was driving a carriage drawn by three horses harnessed abreast.

Thus began my first journey across the country.

We crossed the city and left the bank of the Volga behind us. The road ran past meadows. Bluebells were everywhere. I saw a shepherd boy lying on the grass - a dog at his feet. Cows were dozing in the sun. We skirted a lake fringed with reeds. A flight of ducks rose noisily. The scenery was so familiar that I became frightened for I had never been here before. Then I remembered - the shepherd boy, the ducks in flight over the lake, the fields of bluebells - I had seen them all in grandmother's picture book. A few months ago I had



recited a poem for grandfather's birthday. It was about the noise ducks make when rising from a lake. Katie and I had sung a song about bluebells for grandmother's birthday. I had dreamed of this landscape often, but this was real.

Many years later, analysing this unforgettable day of my early childhood, I understood that I had seen a typical picture of Russia, recorded by Russian painters and poets for generations. Pictures of these landscapes had been shown to me by my grandparents to develop a love for Russia in me. Only then did I understand what grandfather had meant when he once said that he and the soldiers were protecting Russia - so that no Tartars with their whips would ever again gallop across the Russian meadows, so that no Napoleon's army would ever again tramp over the country roads of Russia, so that a shepherd boy could lie on the grass without fear and the ducks could settle on the lakes.

Sitting in the carriage on that day of my first journey, I thrilled in anticipation of seeing yet another familiar landscape. Here it was - a barefooted boy with a reed flute up a tree, his trousers torn at the knee. We passed a birch grove; I heard the murmur of a brook and saw an old mill leaning sideways a little. Three bearded peasants were sitting on the ground eating black (rye?) bread and drinking water from the brook - exactly as in the painting in our front hall.

The horses suddenly increased their speed and we entered a one-street village. A flock of chickens and geese ran noisily in different directions from under the carriage.

We had our lunch in a hut - curd cheese with sour





cream, rye bread and milk.

An hour later we were on our way again. The road passed through a stand of oak, then a pine wood. Ahead, in a meadow, stood a large one-storey house surrounded by a broad verandah.

"Here is your home" said Demian the coachman. "The landlord's house is on the left, a mile from here".

Life in the country was quite different to the life I had been accustomed to. There were no more fairy stories and no more prayers. We lived and ate out on the verandah and only slept in the house. Even the lavatory was outside the house.

In the morning we all went swimming in a near-by lake. In the afternoons Undina usually took Mina, Katie, Natasha and me to the woods to pick flowers and - as the season progressed - berries and mushrooms. The rest of the time we were left to our own devices. At the home of our grandparents Katie and I were never left alone.

Two or three days after my arrival, mother returned. She told me that grandfather was feeling better and was asking for me. Therefore, if I wished, I could go home in the morning. This was the beginning of numerous trips between town and country.

The atmosphere at home had changed considerably. Grandfather was definitely fading away. He would be glad to see me, but would tire quickly. He was often delirious. Grandmother divided her time between me and grandfather.

There was a large box of sand in our garden for Katie and me, but I had outgrown the sandbox; instead of



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Life in the country was quite different to the life I had been accustomed to - there were no more fairy stories and no more prayers. We lived and ate out on the verandah and only slept in the house. Even the toilet was outside.

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playing, I would wander aimlessly along the garden paths. I would catch the mood of the house and subconsciously worry about grandfather. Grandmother would notice this and send me back to the country.

Then grandfather would ask for me again and would worry about me. I would be sent for. So I travelled back and forth every few days. I loved these trips between the country house and home.

During this period I did not have an opportunity of getting better acquainted with my mother, for when I was in the country she was usually in town, and vice versa.

In the first week of September grandfather passed away. I was in the country at the time.

A carriage was sent to bring Undina, Nina, Katie and me home for the funeral.

On our arrival, Michael with his face swollen and eyes red, took us to the ballroom. As I entered ~~the~~ an <sup>scent</sup> overpowering ~~smell~~ of flowers almost choked me. The windows were closed and shuttered. Wreaths and garlands of flowers surrounded the coffin which stood in the center of the room. Small votive lights flickered in front of the icons. Three large candles were lit at the head of the coffin. Grandmother in a black dress stood beside it. A monk was reading the psalms by the light of a small candle. The room was full of shadows.

A corpse clothed in grandfather's dress uniform lay in the coffin. I knew immediately that it was not grandfather - there was no warmth, no smile for me. I kissed his forehead as I had been instructed to, and the coldness of the cor-



penetrated through me and frightened me. This was a nunny. Was the whole household bewitched to think that this was grandfather? Where was grandfather? I had never faced death before, I had never even seen a dead bird. At that moment K I longed for my grandfather - to reassure me that there was nothing to fear, to hold me tight, so that I would know that he was here.

I went to his library hoping to find him. The room was dark, lighted only by the flickering votive light I loved so much; however, this time it cast strange grey shadows. I wanted light - bright light everywhere.

This was my first encounter with the problem of life and death - light and darkness.

The only memory I have of the funeral is the drizzle of the seasonal rain and the tolling of the bells which tore my heart to pieces.

The day after grandfather's funeral mother said that the war with Japan was over, the treaty signed. It was time for her to return to Harbin. She asked grandmother if she would like to come and live with her. Grandmother replied that she would stay here where the spirit of Michael Nikolaevitch still lived. She wondered whether mother would take Katie and me back with her to Manchuria or leave us. Mother replied that the decision was entirely up to us. Katie wanted to be with Nina, I chose to stay with grandmother.

A week later mother found a smaller apartment for grandmother and me, hired a german governess to take to Harbin with her, and was ready to leave.

Dasha decided to remain in Russia. Undina was willing





to go with mother to take care of Tania and Serge.

In the middle of September grandmother and I accompanied mother and the children to the wharf and saw them off on their journey to Manchuria.

The seasonal rains <sup>had</sup> begun on the day of grandfather's funeral. There was a sharp drop in temperature. The sky was overcast. The water of the Volga had a muddy yellowish tint.

I did not mind the children leaving. Due to my continual journeying between country and town I had not developed any special friendship with any of them. Katie had not been my playmate this summer. She had spent her time with Nina. However, as I stood on the pier waving to the outgoing ship, it seemed to me that a big grey shadow of the overcast sky was clutching at me, like a cold hand. Then I saw it. It was not the ship I was waving at. It was our home floating away along the Volga. I saw grandfather standing in the glass turret waving back at me. I suddenly realized that I was not a baby any more. I had grown up during the summer. I was tall, thin and awkward. I had been waving goodbye to my beautiful babyhood. I finally understood that grandfather was gone for ever. I and grandmother were left alone to face this strange, grey, world - where not everything is music and sunshine. I was frightened and forgot to look at the crosses - to see the raindrops that looked like pearls.



LIFE WITH GRANDMOTHER

Our new home was a second floor Flat in a two-storied house, with a large verandah overlooking the garden. We had the furniture from the dining room and grandmother's sitting room. Grandmother and I shared a bedroom. There was also a room for my new teacher - Maria Ivanovna who taught me Russian grammar.

Natasha, our cook, and Masha the maid, moved with us. Their rooms were in the kitchen wing. Michael and the other orderlies could not remain with us any longer. Michael took Martishka to the regimental tables where he could give her good care. He came regularly to see whether he could do anything for us.

The man <sup>who looked after</sup> ~~that took care of~~ the yard attended to the heating, polished the floors and trimmed the lamps.

Medor and Grunka came with us.

Grandmother exchanged our grand piano for an upright one which fitted nicely into her sitting room.

I began to take piano lessons and joined a group of children for dancing lessons. Grandmother taught me French grammar.

The routine of our life became adjusted to my needs and wishes. Grandmother became my constant companion. She read to me, took me to childrens' plays, the ballet and other forms of entertainment. We visited grandfather's grave every week. A garden bench stood near the grave where grandmother would sit and talk to grandfather, sharing our life with him.

We attended church service every Sunday morning at an old convent a few blocks from our home.

On the few occasions <sup>when</sup> ~~that~~ grandmother went out alone, I would go to the kitchen to see Natasha. She always had a samovar boiling on the kitchen table. Masha would come in, ~~and~~ we would all drink tea and talk.



~~thus~~ In the kitchen I learned of the existence of hobgoblins who lived in ovens. Natasha said that our hobgoblin was very friendly and that she would do everything to keep him so. She even baked a small roll for him when baking bread, and left it in the oven. The next morning only a few crumbs remained.

Masha wondered if mice could have eaten it. "Could be", Natasha replied, "but I left the roll for the hobgoblin, and if he let the mice have it - that's his business.

~~ymphs~~ To me, the most interesting topic of conversation was the water nymphs who came out of the Volga on to a sandy beach by moonlight, to comb their long green hair with golden combs. In their clear, musical voices, they sang a song which would capture the soul of any man passing by.

Another popular <sup>theme</sup> ~~topic~~ of our kitchen discussions was that of drowned women who came out of the Volga, wrapped in white shrouds, water streaming from their hair - to haunt their old homes.

I would listen to <sup>these tales</sup> ~~such talk~~ with my heart ~~beating~~ in my throat, those pimples all over my body. It never occurred to me to share these stories with my grandmother - they belonged to the kitchen, to Natasha and the hobgoblin.

Avdotia, a peasant woman from across the river, came once a week to bring fresh butter and black bread to market, and stayed overnight with Natasha. When she arrived, I would go to the kitchen to greet her and stayed for tea.

Avdotia would talk about crossing the river, the bad weather, Puck who lived in the pine <sup>forest</sup> ~~wood~~ surrounding her village. Puck was especially bad in stormy weather. He would lure men into the depth of the woods and leave them there to drown in the swamp or freeze to death in the snow.



nothing a man can do about it" she would say "but cross himself and  
all on God, then no spirit can touch him. The trouble is that a man  
nics and swears at the ~~wood~~ forest and at Puck; then Puck is sure to  
t the best of him".

I would recall grandfather's words - "Be strong in spirit and  
ace your trust in God. Fear is the root of all evil".

My life was full. I would have been completely happy were it not  
r the strange phenomenon of life and death which had entered my mind  
th grandfather's passing. I was confused and frightened because I  
uld not understand. At that age I tried to find an answer in the shadows-  
the design of light and darkness.

Grandmother worried. Sitting at grandfather's grave she would  
y:- "Michael Nicholaevitch, I just do not know what to do. This kind of  
fe is not right for Lialia. She is a little girl, only seven years old.  
e should be with her family, have her sisters to play with. Here she *either*  
ays with me, or is in the kitchen with the servants. I think it would  
better for her if we went to Manchuria to live with ~~M~~ Marguerite.

Fire - the aftermath of <sup>the</sup> 1905 revolution - finally forced her to  
decision.

It was early in the spring with the snow still on the ground, when  
re burst out simultaneously in six different places on the outskirts of  
e town (in the middle of the night). It quickly united into a continuous  
ont, surrounding the town, moving rapidly towards the center.

I awoke in the morning to a strangely grey sky and a smoky  
mosphere. Tiny pieces of burnt paper floated through the air.

As the fire progressed, people were evacuated into the streets  
th their belongings while firemen furiously soaked the houses with water  
their attempt to halt the fire.





Our turn came at about seven o'clock that night. Michael and the soldiers came to move us out when the settlement in the ravine, about ten blocks from our house, caught fire.

The night was dark except for the bright glow which surrounded the town.

Natasha took me to the edge of the ravine to see the fire. I was almost hypnotized by the ocean of flame at my feet. Golden-red tongues with blue edges licked the small wooden huts jumping quickly from one to another. Falling logs, consumed by the fire, sent off fountains of sparks. Streams of water zigzagged through the air. The firemen in their black uniforms looked like devils with forks. The whole ravine was an illusion of hell - yet it was grandiose.

It was the screams that brought me back to my senses, forcing me to look around. Ghastly faces covered with ashes, tightened lips and eyes filled with terror, met my gaze. Sitting on their shabby belongings ( for the ravine was the settlement of the poor) most of the women appeared stunned. Some were praying - for they assumed that the end of the world had come, others were crying.

Here it was again, the grandeur of the fire on the one hand, and the horror of the disaster on the other. Light and darkness.

Michael and the soldiers came to move us back to the house at three o'clock in the morning.

The fire in the ravine was under control. Dark clouds were gathering across the sky and the first spring rain could be expected at any moment. It took two more days to put the fire out completely.

When the catastrophe was over and life resumed it's normal course, grandmother told me that we would soon leave for Manchuria.



By the middle of April we were ready to leave. Michael took Medor and Natasha adopted Grunka. Some of our friends persuaded grandmother to leave her furniture with them until she was sure that she would stay in Manchuria.

At that time distances seemed much greater than they do now, and Manchuria was considered to be at the end of the world. Grandmother was sure that we would never return and that I would never see Russia again, so she decided to show me the Volga on our way. We went up the river to it's source, then down to the Caspian Sea and back again to Syzran<sup>?</sup> where we boarded the train for Manchuria.

Volga is not a spectacular river. It is broad and quiet, ~~running~~ flowing placidly ~~among~~ between fields, meadows and hill. It was the first great trade route between the north and the Caspian Sea.

The Russians have a special love for the Volga. They call it "Mother Volga". The land on either side is fertile and the river is rich with fish.

Many historical events are connected with the Volga, and there are many songs <sup>about</sup> ~~dedicated~~ to it.

Grandmother showed me a map of the <sup>Volga</sup> ~~river~~ and told me about the historical events which took place ~~along the Volga~~.

~~All of~~ The Volga steamers were luxurious. They all had three decks. The narrow top deck containing the bridge and captain's cabin was for crew members ~~only~~. The restaurant, the first and second class cabins were located on the middle deck. The third class passengers - the peasant, small merchants and sometimes students, occupied the lower deck. It was this deck that drew my attention because of the spontaneous gayety of the people.

Standing at the rail of the middle deck I would look down towards the stern <sup>of the ship</sup> where the third class passengers sat on their



*Some*  
 belongings. A man would usually play the harmonica, another would dance the Kamarinskaya. The women in their bright kerchiefs would clap in tune, while the young girls would cast killing <sup>glances</sup> looks at the men, while the latter would pull at their mustaches. Loud laughter from the lower deck and <sup>an</sup> ~~its~~ echo from the water and hills would reach my ears.

At twilight songs of the Volga would come from the lower deck ~~and~~ <sup>ing</sup> carry me away into the sixteenth to eighteen centuries when there were no steamers along the Volga. I would not hear the voices from the lower deck, but the voices of boat haulers pulling ~~the~~ loaded barges up the river, singing the songs of the Volga. I would see them straining along the banks, <sup>over</sup> sweat running down their unshaven faces, the straps <sup>of the tow ropes</sup> cutting into their ~~is~~ sun tanned flesh.

Another vivid picture recorded in my mind during this trip along the Volga <sup>is connected</sup> ~~was in connection~~ with the "Zheguly" - the region of the highest hills along the Volga, which had been made famous by the notorious outlaw Stienka Razin, who, in the middle of the seventeenth century, had his headquarters in a cave in these hills. Stienka Razin had been the leader of a large band. He terrorized the population along the Volga by robberies, the execution of boyars, rich merchants and <sup>army</sup> commanding officers. Some Russians considered him a rebel who fought for the rights of the people. Many songs and legends <sup>have been</sup> ~~were~~ composed about Stienka Razin.

When our steamer was <sup>passing</sup> ~~crossing~~ this region, the third class passengers started to sing the famous Stienka Razin song; and <sup>Before my eyes</sup> ~~I could see~~ a row of brightly decorated <sup>boats</sup> ~~canoes~~ <sup>(?)</sup> appearing from behind an island. I could see Stienka Razin in the first canoe, lifting his bride, the beautiful princess, and throwing her into the river to avoid discord



among his men. I could hear his band singing the requiem for the soul of the princess.

I had once asked grandmother where ~~had~~ I come from and she had replied that I had been an angel before the stork brought me to their home. Standing at the rail ~~of the deck~~ I pondered: - if I, being an angel in the 16th - 18th centuries, had been flying over the Volga, then I could have actually seen the Volga boatmen along the river's bank, and Stienka Razin attacking the boyars and ~~the~~ merchants, throwing the princess into the river. Now, in association with the song I remembered the past.

There was no restuarant on the lower deck. Meals were not served to the third class passengers who brought their food with them. It usually consisted of black bread, smoked herring, fresh vegetables and fruit in season. The steamship company provided a samovar which was placed on the open stern deck where people liked to sit. They would help themselves to tea and talk.

I would sneak down to the lower deck and join the crowd. Their conversation was similar to that of Natasha and Avdotia, spirits and apparitions were always involved.

One of these stories, told by an old peasant with a long white beard and faded blue eyes is especially clear in my mind.

"Once in a while", he began, <sup>always</sup> in the middle of a clear, frosty night, seven wolves would come to our village, wagging their tails and snooping around. The wolves would walk in line, one behind the other, <sup>the</sup> first one would be white, and the last one would have blood on his paws. The horses would not snort at them, nor would the dogs bark. Showing their white teeth, they would poke their noses into the church yard - looking for a sinner. If the priest were a brave one, he would mix his buckshot with goat hairs and shoot at the





wolves. In the morning he would find seven old women lying in a row in the middle of the road, all of them bleeding. The first one would be grey and the last one would be lame. If the priest approached them with his silver cross held high above his head, they would turn ~~to~~ ashes and fade away. No trace would be left on the white snow."

He stopped, then said "God be with us" and every body repeated after him "God be with us".

A complete silence settled over the deck for a few minutes, then someone <sup>picked up a</sup> ~~took out~~ harmonica and a gay song about a rich merchant who <sup>w</sup>ent to the fair, spread over the Volga.



Early in May we boarded a train at Souzran on our way to Manchuria. Our schedule was as follows:- One week from Souzran to Chelyabinsk where we would change trains for Irkutsk. Three weeks later we would arrive at Irkutsk and take another train to Station Manchuria on the Manchurian border where mother was to meet us. Another change of trains, and in three days we would reach Harbin. We had a first class compartment with two lower berths and a table by the window between them. It, but there is no order".

As the railway company did not supply either linen or blankets, we carried these with us. Grandmother made up our beds, covered them with spreads and brightly coloured pillovs, thus transforming them into attractive and comfortable studio couches for day time use. There was no restaurant on the train. Food could either be obtained at station restaurants which were rare and inconveniently located, or at handy peasant markets situated alongside the railway lines.

Peasants from nearby villages brought roast chickens, ducks, geese, local game and fish, for sale when a train was due. Hot borsch and pies stuffed with either meat, cabbage or carrots could always be purchased. Milk and mounds of fresh butter, curd cheese, freshly baked bread and hot baked potato covered the stalls. Grandmother used grandfather's army canteen to bring the food to our compartment. I loved to go with her to these markets, here, as in the third class of the Volga steamer, gayety prevailed. The women were very proud of their products, the well risen bread, the nicely browned chickens and the golden-brown crust on their pies. Laughter and jokes could be heard on all sides, and a harmonika would be phying somewhere. No door separated the compartment from the entrance platform. The train conductor filled our teapot with boiling water at

Early in May we boarded a train at Gouren on our way to Manchuria. Our schedule was as follows: - One week from Gouren to Chelyabinsk where we would change trains for Irkutsk. Three weeks later we would arrive at Irkutsk and take another train to station Manchuria on the Manchurian border where another was to meet us.

Another change of trains, and in three days we would reach Khabarovsk. We had a first class compartment with two lower berths and a table by the window between them.

As the railway company did not supply either linen or blankets, we carried these with us. Grandmother made up our beds, covered them with spreads and brightly coloured pillows, thus transforming them into attractive and comfortable studios for day time use.

There was no restaurant on the train. Food could either be obtained at station restaurants which were rare and inconveniently located, or at handy peasant markets situated alongside the railway lines.

Peasants from small villages brought roast chickens, ducks, geese, local game and fish, for sale when a train was due. Hot porridge and pies stuffed with either meat, cabbage or carrots could always be purchased. Milk and curds of fresh butter, curd cheese, freshly baked bread and hot baked potato covered the stalls.

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The train conductor filled our teapot with boiling water at

each stop. We were very comfortable.

Grandmother had her knitting with her. She was always knitting sweaters and stockings for me, beadedreads etc. He liked to play cards and succeeded in finding congenial companions. For me she brought along a new book on early Russian history.

It began with the year of 862 when the Russians invited the Varangians from across the sea to come and rule the country - because "The land is rich and fertile, but there is no order".

This book was based on folk tales which had been passed on by word of mouth from one generation to another, and was full of legends and superstitions of the times. It discussed such episodes as Prince Igor's campaign against the Gumanes. It vividly presented Princess Yaroslavna, the wife of Igor, who stood on the town wall each night of the campaign crying and calling like a cuckoo. Yaroslavna asked the wind of directing enemy arrows against her beloved troops and pleaded with the Dniepr river to bring the Russian canoe back to her.

It vividly described the period of Prince Vladimir the saint. The construction of 1041 and the baptism of the Russian people in the Dniepr river.

The exploits of the legendary knights Ilia Mouronetz, Aliesha Popovich and Nikita Dobrinya - who single handed protected the Russian border against Mongolian attacks - had not been forgotten.

This book on Russian history blended in nicely with my recently acquired knowledge of sprites and apparitions. Grandmother read it to me whenever I was disposed to listen.

The average speed of the train was approximately 25 miles per hour. No door separated the carriage steps from the entrance platform and I soon discovered that the top step was the best place



on the train. Sitting here I would be carried along - only the wind in my face and the woods or the steppes around me. Wild fruit trees were in full bloom their branches bending under the weight of blossoms. The steppe was a velvet-green carpet painted here or there with bright flowers. As we entered the woods of Siberia there were patches of snow, brooks gurgled everywhere, and early spring flowers peeped out here and there. The leaves were fresh and of different shades of green. I watched a swarm of gnat-playing in the golden beam of the setting sun; or the evening mist stretching its bluish-gray cobwebs among the trees.

Once I crept out at night, while grandmother was asleep, and sat on the bottom step of the carriage, dangling my feet in the air - the wind tearing at my nightgown. The moonlight cast fantastic shadows from the cliffs and trees. Clinging to the handrail I was filled with a strange excitement and fear. I felt I was one of the sprites - a relative of Puck. My imagination took me deep into the woods. I saw elves and gnomes and listened to the song of forest nymphs - or was it the song of the nightingale?

Thus the time slipped by unnoticed, and before I realized it, we had reached the Manchurian border.





MANCHURIA AND FRONTIER LIFE

It is one thing to see a picture of a Chinese Mandarin, or to listen to grandmother reading Jule Vern's adventures of a Chinese man.

It is an entirely different thing to face a mob of six foot tall Chinamen yelling and tearing at your luggage. This is what we faced stepping out of the railway carriage at the Manchurian border. I was stunned and I believe Grandmother was too. I do not know what would have happened if my mother had not appeared on the scene. She shouted one word, that sounded to me like "Tsoubo", and all these big Chinamen scattered in different directions, like chickens fleeing from under the wheels of a moving carriage.

"Welcome home Mama", mother said to grandmother. "How Peter your suitcases and he will take care of them; later he will attend to your baggage. We have plenty of time".

A man in porter's uniform stepped out from behind mother and started to check our suitcases.

Mother said "Let us go to the carriage, it is quite a distance from here!"

So we began to walk along and across the railroad tracks. The air was hot, the humidity high. We finally came to a third class American Pullman on a siding.

Katy, Nina and Natasha jumped out to meet us. Here I had another surprise. From the car platform we entered, what seemed to be, a large dining room. Three studio couches were set along the wall. A large table set for the evening meal stood in front of one of them. A long wooden bench was on the opposite side of the table. Two chairs were placed at the ends. There were also a couple of armchairs and small tables near the couches. Two regular railroad compartments



were located behind the dining room. At the end of the car there was a half compartment for Peter the porter, next to a compact built-in kitchen. In addition to taking care of the car and arranging for its transportation, he prepared our meals. There was also a small shower room and lavatory.

I learned later that the railway company provided cars for the use of its staff. However, usually those were small, first-class Russian cars, neatly polished inside. The number available was smaller than the number of staff members, and in order to avoid sharing one, my father had asked for a third-class American Pullman which he had remodelled to suit his needs.

One time during the night, the car had been connected to a freight train. When I awoke in the morning, we were passing high mountains and cliffs.

There is a legend about Manchuria. The Russians say it originated among the Christian Chinese- the Chinese say it is Russian. Whose ever it is, the legend goes as follows:- When God created the earth, he planted grass and flowers in the meadows. He filled the ocean and rivers with water. He planted pines in the north and palms at the Equator. Everything had its place. Then God sent his angel to see if everything was in order. The angel flew slowly, admiring the beauty of God's creation. Suddenly he stopped - there was an empty space where Manchuria was supposed to be, only the flame burning at the center of the earth could be seen. He rushed back to heaven. "Your Honour" he addressed God, "we have forgotten Manchuria. There is nothing there but an empty space".

"Well, well", said God, "I have used all my seed, but let us see what we can do".

He went into the barn, took a broom, swept all the corners and shook all the sacks in which he had kept his seed. Thus he



collected a sack full of different kinds of seeds- from the south and from the north, from the west and from the east- and gave it to the angel.

"Throw this over Manchuria", he said to the angel, "something will cover the hole and something will grow there".

Something did grow. Manchurian vegetation is a mixture of the north and the south.

There are big northern pines in the woods and wild grape vines wind about the trees. Northern moss covers the ground, and ferns of the south grow in the ravines. Wild flowers range from lily-of-the-valley to orchids.

Northern bears live in the woods and tigers can be met in the mountains.

Where ever I looked I saw the grandeur of nature, but nowhere could I see the blue cupolas with golden crosses - the familiar sight of Russia. Instead, now and then, a small gray huts in a large field would meet my gaze. A Chinese man would be sitting near a hut smoking his pipe; the women would be picking roots in the field, a dozen half naked, dirty, Chinese children - with large heads and thin arms and legs - followed by a dozen starved looking dogs, would run towards the passing train.

But with Nina, Katie and Natasha, I really had no time for dreaming or meditation. We were a lively bunch, hanging half way out of the train windows, teasing each other and sharing whatever we saw.

Grandmother knitted in the dining room, mother talked to her and played solitaire.

So the three days passed by and we arrived in Harbin.



We reached Harbin late in the afternoon - it had been hot and humid. My aunt Olga had driven out to meet us in a ~~light~~ two-wheeled carriage drawn by a single horse, <sup>which</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>ed</sup> seating two. Our coachman Dimitriy was also waiting, in a carriage for four.

Mother took Nina and Natasha and drove the two-wheeled carriage home. Aunt Olga, grandmother, Katie and I went with Dimitriy.

It had all been like a dream:- the pair of beautiful, perfectly matched, black horses, Dimitriy in his black sleeveless jacket and red ~~satin~~ <sup>cen</sup> shirt with full sleeves; the five mile drive along a dusty road among scorched fields; the small dirty village with a crooked unpaved street; then an avenue of blooming acacia trees and the guards at the gate. Another stretch of acacia trees, then a park with huge elms, their trunks from two to three feet in diameter. <sup>Clumps</sup> ~~clusters~~ of blooming shrubs were scattered among them. The velvet green grass was starred with bright flowers and a herd of deer, disturbed by our passing, rose to the alert.

To the right was a large, single storeyed house. To the left a rose garden. A circular flower bed about twelve feet in diameter was in front of the entrance. A row of cannas and gladioli, shaped like bird wings, stretched on both sides of the entrance along the facade.

Children and dogs appeared in the distance.

A Chinese, six foot tall, with a pigtail hanging to below his knees, dressed in a long blue Chinese robe and soft blue Chinese slippers, opened the front door.

I wondered ~~wh~~ether I had stepped into a tale from the Arabian Nights.

To the right of the entrance hall was the drawing room, to the left a library, and in front of us was the dining room. Music and singing came from the drawing room, laughter could be heard





from the library. We stepped into the dining room with a table <sup>enough to</sup> seating at least thirty.

Katie took me by the hand. "Come", she said "I will show you the rest of the house and the nursery". We walked along a corridor with a row of doors on the right. The left wall was almost completely made of glass.

Katie, walking in front of me began to enumerate:-

"This is the guest room, this is uncle Niel's room, this is Aunt Olga's room, this is Nina's room and mine....."

I was looking in the opposite direction, through the glass, <sup>holding</sup> ~~and held~~ my breath. Here was a room made of glass; the floor was green tile, there were palms, banana trees, and other tropical plants. Some had roots <sup>coming</sup> ~~withing~~ in the air. I had only seen plants like that in picture books. There were paths and marble benches among the trees. A golden pheasant was drinking ~~water~~ from a fountain. Canaries were flying in and out of a six foot open cage. A white cockatoo was swinging on a trapeze near another large, open cage.

Katie turned to me. "Oh", she said, "this is father's winter garden. The canaries belong to aunt Olga, the pheasant to uncle Niel, the cockatoo is ours. I will show it to you later. We must see Fraulein (our German governess) and let her know that we are here".

We started off again and finally entered a room with an oval table, for at least sixteen persons, in the center.

"This is where we eat and study", Katie explained. "There is Natasha's, Taniya's and Serge's bedroom. Fraulein's room is next to that. Fraulein" she called "we are here". A large woman came out and <sup>spoke</sup> ~~addressed~~ us in German.

I did not understand German and was more interested in



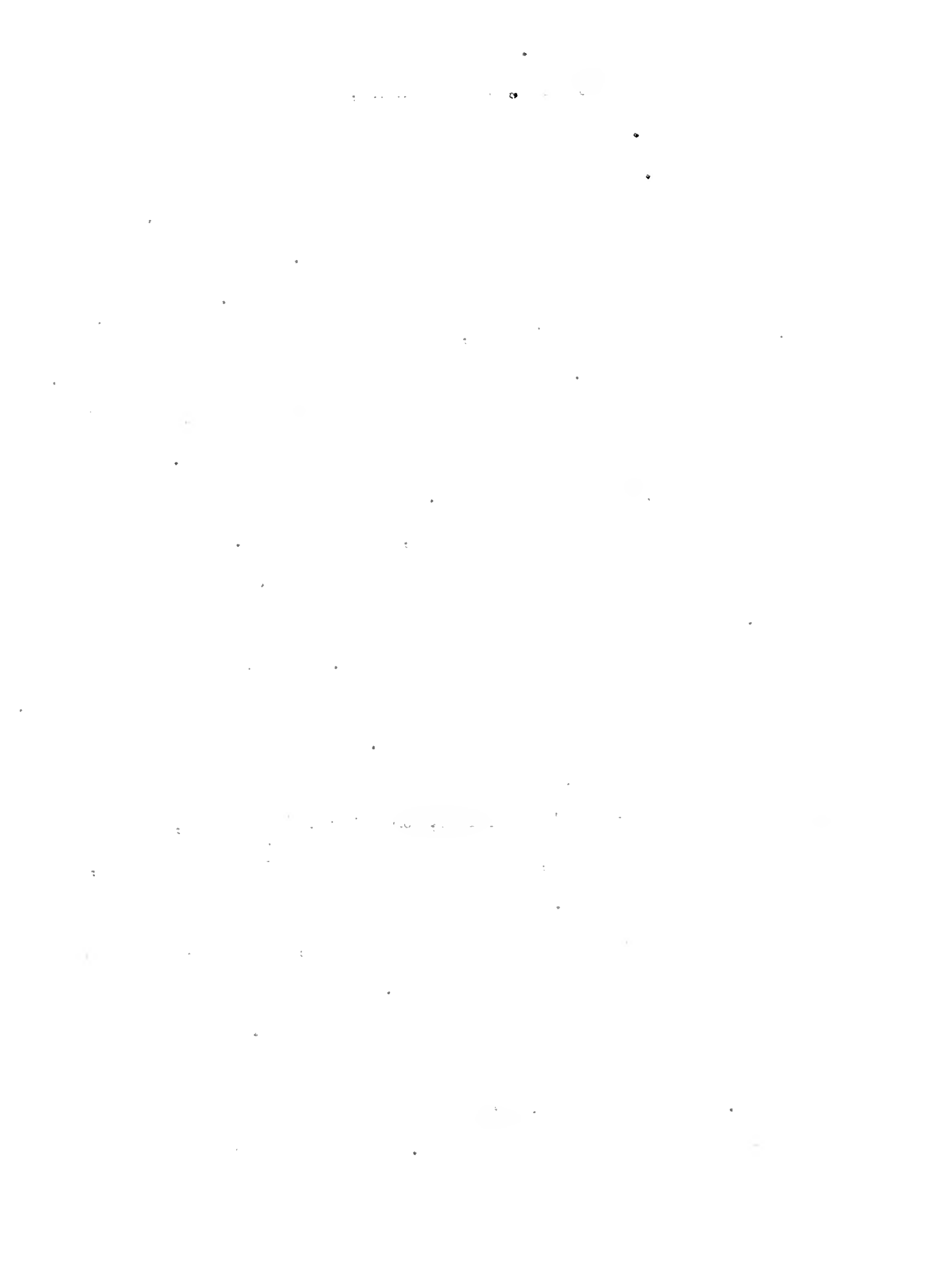
a row of six windows with low, broad sills, overlooking the driveway and rose garden. The windows were wide open (screens were not used at that time).

I saw a group of children approaching ~~the windows~~. At the same time mother drove in with Nina and Natasha. She did not drive up to the front door but stopped in front of the windows. Another Chinese, also with a long pigtail, ran out from behind the house and took charge of the horse. Nina and Natasha ran towards the windows. Then all of the children ~~jumped~~ <sup>jumped</sup> into the room like frogs, and the next moment mother also entered the room through ~~a~~ <sup>one of the</sup> windows. Now I was certain that I ~~had been~~ <sup>was</sup> dreaming. In Russia only thieves or hooligans would climb through a window, never a lady. This was the first time in my life that I faced a change in society and the old traditions.

Natasha was pulling me by the hand. "Come, I will show you the trapezium and the Chinese tea-house at the end of the garden".

Suddenly I felt very very tired. <sup>all</sup> I wanted <sup>was</sup> to see grandmother and go to bed. By now I was quite sure that everything beginning with grandfather's funeral, the fire, the Volga, the Liberian forests, Manchuria, and mother jumping through a window, was all a long, long dream. I was sure that in the morning I would wake to the familiar sound of the church bells, in my old nursery with the fairytale paintings on the wall. Grandfather would be waiting to have breakfast with me in the diningroom.

~~However~~, There were a few more surprises in store before I managed to go to bed. The telephone, ~~the~~ electricity and running water in the house - all unheard of in Simbirsk.



FATHER AND HIS ANCESTRY

When father came to Harbin, it was part of an undeveloped Russian frontier. Not many volunteers chose to live in distant, unknown Manchuria. Large salaries and many privileges were granted to the employees of the Chinese Eastern Railway Company as an inducement. Only the adventurous, strong and highly spirited men accepted the appointments. Naturally, the staff members of the railway company quickly became the actual masters of the railway and the adjoining lands - designated in the 1896 treaty for the construction of a railway through northern Manchuria by Russia.

Father had been appointed head of the department of "Land Development". The preservation of the forests and the development of the region between the two Manchurian borders were under his supervision.

The Chinese Eastern Railway Company, controlled by the Russian government, was expected to provide living quarters for all their employees. The housing situation was critical as at that time Harbin consisted of - 1) a small Chinese village - later to be known as Old Harbin 2) a beautifully cultivated garden with a luxurious house in the center - previously occupied by a Chinese general - now assigned to the military and civilian representative of Russia in Manchuria, general Vat. 3) A Chinese military training ground which included a large barrack in the middle of an elm grove - one mile square, a few small barracks, stables and barns in a large yard, and a vegetable garden behind the elm grove.

Only a few of the houses in the Chinese village were fit to live in. The number of employees increased daily.

Realizing the difficulties of the housing committee, father



declared he would accept the Chinese military training ground as his residence.

The place had been neglected after the treaty and was badly run down. Windows in the barracks were broken, plaster pulled off the walls and ceilings, the grounds were overgrown with weeds and covered in debris. No one ever dreamed of living there. So, the housing committee was delighted to satisfy at least one staff member with something nobody else wanted.

In no time father had transformed the place into a paradise. He remodelled the barracks, summoned the fire department to clear and water the land, planted flowering shrubs among the elms, seeded lawns and put in flowers. He put Arabian horses and cows in the stables, pigs in the barn. He bought turkeys, chickens, ducks and geese thus bringing the yard to life.

The forest rangers soon discovered the family's love for wild animals and supplied us with fawns, bear cubs, cranes and other forms of wild life.

Game was plentiful in the wilderness of Manchuria. There were no seasonal restrictions on hunting, so there were many orphans in the woods. The rangers brought them to us.

The animals were left free to roam the grounds. Although the picket fence was low, they had no wish to leave. Simply because the elm grove was an oasis bounded by a dirty noisy town, the railway and burnt fields.

Our mode of life in Harbin did not resemble life in Russia, nor did it represent the life of the Russian society in Manchuria. Rather, it reflected the individuality of our family, strongly influenced by father's ancestry.

As far as I know, our ancestors on father's side belonged





to a small Tartar tribe of tent dwellers. In the eighth and ninth centuries they were hunters and trappers of fur bearing animals in the deep, almost impenetrable west Siberian forests. During that time, by hunting, trading and plunder, they accumulated great riches.

About the twelfth century the tribe crossed the Ural mountains and settled on a large tract of pine forest in the middle of the West Ural region - as a one family clan. Their main occupation continued to be the hunting and trapping of fur bearing animals although, in this region, agriculture was possible.

In northern Russia fur was an important article of trade as fur coats were a necessity during the long severe winter months. The clan began to supply fur to northern Russia. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the rich merchants of Novgorod established a lucrative fur trade and started other industries in the central region of western Ural. Thus the family continued to prosper.

By the time hunting had lost its importance due to the extermination of fur bearing animals, the members of the clan were involved in Ural industry. By the eighteenth century they were Russian and had the title of "Stolboviya Dvoryane" (Landed gentry). They were educated and occupied many responsible posts in military, naval, scientific and industrial fields.

However, because of their ancient lineage, their long period of isolation, their life of independence and continuous intermarriage, they remained tartars. Not only by culture and custom, but also in their physical and psychological development.

All the members of the clan could be easily recognized by their long limbs and short waists, by their high cheek bones,



dark slanting eyes and large sensitive nostrils.

They all were headstrong, independent and arrogant~~t~~ loved life, women and wine. They enjoyed food and horses and were passionate hunters. They believed only in "Natural Selection" - "Only the strong survive, the sick and weak should not exist".



My father, Andrew Sharoff, was the seventeenth of eighteen children in the main branch of the clan. He grew up on the original family estate in the pine forest and was interested in natural science and hunting. At eighteen he graduated from school and then attended a premedical course at the University of Kazan, which he completed successfully in four years. Suddenly he realized that a medical career was not for him. Although he was interested in physics, chemistry biology and anatomy, he had no wish to cure or pamper the sick. Leaving the University of Kazan he enrolled at The Institute of Forestry in Petrograd. Four years later he graduated with honours, and began his forestry career.

He met my mother at her graduation ball in a boarding school for young ladies where she had been placed at the age of twelve. At that time my grandfather was being transferred from place to place with his regiment and had no permanent residence.

My grandmother had attended the same institution, and her eldest sister was headmistress of the school. Emphasis was on music, dancing, art and embroidery. The girls were expected to speak French and German fluently, ride well side-saddle and play croquet. They were not supposed to know that cats had kittens or met tomcats at night. Nor were they supposed to know that cows had tails. These were affairs of the kitchen and the back yard.

When Andrew met Marguerite, she was seventeen, gay, charming and a Slavic beauty with large, blue, laughing eyes, a small straight nose and capriciously curved red lips. Her unruly chestnut hair tinged with copper, curled around her slender neck and small delicate ears. She was well built - slim but with rounded breast and hips.

Andrew wanted Marguerite as he might want a beautiful horse or a well made gun. When he wanted something, he knew how to

get it. There was not much time for courting as he had just received a significant promotion to the post of Commissioner for the Inspection of Siberian forests, and was on his way to Krasnoyarsk in central Siberia. Therefore he started an intensive courtship immediately. He took Marguerite to concerts, ballet and light opera. He practically covered her with flowers and bought pounds and pounds of sugared nuts and fruit - her favourite candy. He fed her icecream and made her drink champagne. He showed her a life she had never seen before.

From the first day of their acquaintanceship Marguerite floated amongst clouds of rose and gold. Her charm and gaiety increased.

At the end of the second week Andrew asked my grandfather for her hand.

There could be no objections. Andrew was healthy and rich. He was young, yet he already occupied a responsible and secure post. Their parents were of the same social standing.

It had all happened just a little too swiftly, but Grandfather could understand that. He was a military man and knew that when duty calls a man must go.

Three weeks after their first meeting Marguerite was married to Andrew and left with him for Krasnoyarsk in Siberia.

Grandfather had never realized that he had given his precious flower to a barbarian.

Four years later father received his second important promotion and went to Vladivostok - this is the point at which my story began.

I do not know how ~~my~~ the years of my mother's adjustment

passed. When I met her, she was very cool, efficient and independent. There were no traces left of her life with my grandparents in Russia.

In the house my father's influence was predominant.

When I first knew my father in Harbin his annual salary was 12,000 rubles - a fantastic salary in Russia. The house, heating and light were supplied by the railway company. Such celebrations as Christmas Day, Easter, mother's and father's birthdays and all formal dinners were paid for by the same company.

Chinese labor was cheap. The highest salary paid in our house was 20 rubles a month to the cook. The head boy received 18 rubles. The rest of the servants no more than ten rubles, and most of them five rubles monthly.

We had plenty of Chinese help.

The law of the house was freedom of thought and action.

Every member of the household could do as he pleased provided he was responsible for his actions, did not interfere with the actions of others, did not ask or expect help in case of trouble. The judgement and opinion of society was of no consequence as every member of any society has freedom of thought and of action. If the neighbours did not like our mode of living, they did not have to come.

Everything in the house was adjusted to the convenience and comfort of living - heavy durable furniture, soft rugs, large windows and broad low sills.

This brings me back to the incident of mother entering the house through a window. According to the principles governing our household, there was no law against it. The house was very large and Manchurian summers very hot so that windows were kept wide open. There was always a current of air through them, consequently the sills

were a pleasant place to sit, read, write or talk. There were only four entrances into the house (one through the kitchen - used by the servants only). However, there were many windows which presented a short direct route to any part of the house. It was so easy, sitting on the window ledge to swing ones legs across to the opposite side. So it became a habit among the family and close friends to enter the house through any window that was handy.

The house was always full of friends and the friends of friends. Artists, engineers, musicians and teachers without jobs or on holiday, stayed with us for months, sometimes years. There would be groups of friends in various rooms discussing politics, philosophy or literature. A game of chess might be in progress in father's library while music and songs came from the drawing room; a pair of lovers in the winter garden.

What I found most intriguing was that friends would be in the house while the hosts were out - a situation unthinkable in the home of my grandparents.

The same law of independence and freedom applied to the children. There was very little communion between the adults and the minors, simply because the adults had their life and interests - the children had their own. It was much more interesting for us - the youngsters - to build a look-out post in a tree or play with the pony and deer or catch frogs, than to listen to a philosophical discussion.

In the park we were absolutely free and had our own guests, children from the Russian community of Old Harbin. Children of the railroad engineers, technicians, workmen and of our Russian servants who stayed in our park during the summer.



Although Natasha, Taniya and Serge were supposed to be with Fraulein, she could not keep track of them in the park among the other children. Her supervision during the summer months was reduced to meal times.

We ate with Fraulein an hour earlier than the adults, our friends ate with us. There were seldom less than eight or ten extra children at the table.

Mother led her own life. She was preoccupied with the organization and supervision of a Russian-Chinese Orphanage and spent most of her time at committee meetings. She usually left the house in the morning driving her own sulky, and returned home by 7 p.m. for dinner, or as requested by father.

The servants' lives were on a similar pattern. They had their duties and were left alone to complete their obligations. In the house they moved as silently as ghosts and were seldom seen unless needed.

Remembering my interludes with our cook Natasha in Simbirsk I decided to visit the kitchen. I stepped in and stopped in bewilderment. I had entered a crowded Chinese tavern. Sunlight, reflecting off the bright copper pots and pans on the walls shon into my eyes. Smoke from Chinese pipes drifted around lazily. A group of Chinese were eating at a table; another group at another table were playing Chinese checkers, a third was cleaning crabs, while a fourth was washing dishes. All these people were chattering simultaneously in Chinese. The loud murmur of their voices and the clatter of dishes blended into a continuous roar. The men seemed to look straight at me without noticing me, as if I did not exist.

Nina had seen me going in and came after me.

"Where do you think you are going?" she demanded, grabbing

me by an arm. "You are not supposed to enter the kitchen. The men are working. Do not interfere".

She dragged me out. I was glad to leave. For the first time in my life I felt that I was not wanted.

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Such was the place grandmother and I had reached after our long journey. My life changed considerably. Although I shared a bedroom with grandmother, we were close companions no longer. In Russia, for as long as I could remember, meals were the time for the family to gather together. Grandmother and grandfather shared the problems of their daily lives during meals. Katy and I were the centre of attention. We took part in the conversation. After the loss of grandfather and Katy's departure for Harbin, grandmother continued to share the problems of her daily life with me.

Now, I ate with the children - she ate with the adults. Only in the evenings, when she was putting me to bed, did we talk. Although she was always ready to read or talk to me, I had no time for her. I was busy exploring the park and this new life of freedom so strange, unknown and fascinating.

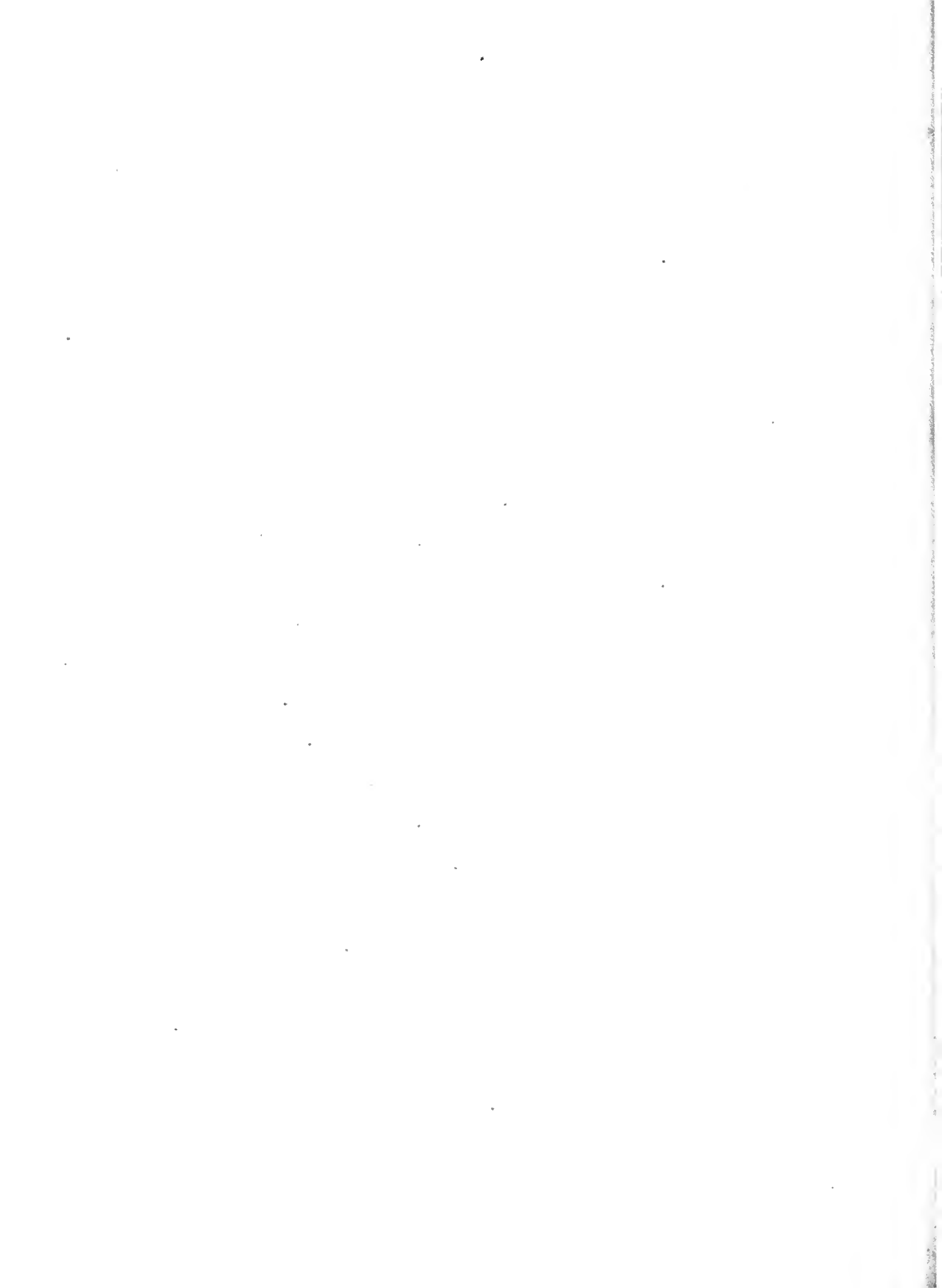
About three weeks after my arrival in Harbin, mother stepped out on to the verandah one afternoon, where we were having lunch with Fraulein, and announced that because of the hot weather she had decided to take us and grandmother to Okeanskaya - an ocean resort near Vladivostok. She told us that our railroad car was at a small station about half a mile from the park and suggested that after dinner that evening we should walk there with Fraulein and Undina. She and grandmother would come later with Dimitriy, bringing our baggage.

We left Harbin that night, and early in the morning three days later reached Okeanskaya.

A soft cool breeze woke me. There was a strange, exciting smell in the air. I looked through the open window and saw blue sparkling water blending into the sky far away. Whitecaps were spilling over the golden sand, as if caressing the shore. Gently, the air played about my face and bare shoulders. For an instant I felt completely relaxed - at peace and serene. Even the roar of the incoming waves had a soothing effect. All I could comprehend was the extent of the sky blue water.

It only lasted a moment. Everybody awoke in the next few seconds, and with loud shouts and laughter we were jumping from the car, racing towards the incoming waves.

The following week brought me a new experience, the sensual pleasure of cool blue water and hot sun on the body. We - the children - were actually drunk on salt water, fresh air, the hot sun and the smell of the ocean. It took me a whole week to get over this peculiar state of drunkenness; then I began to look around me. For the first time I noticed the rapid descent of the sun



towards the horizon, the golden path of the dark blue water stretching across the Pacific. I began to observe the sun sinking into the ocean. Watch the fantastic designs of the clouds painted by the setting sun. I wondered, for the first time, at the artistic power of God.

Mother stayed in a guest house with some of her friends and persuaded grandmother to go with her. We remained in the car with Fraulein and Undina - Peter cooking our meals. Grandmother came every afternoon and sat on the beach with us. I usually dropped off to sleep near her and she protected me from the scorching sun with her umbrella.

Mother would come in the evenings with a crowd of friends and their children. Buckets of lobsters would be brought in. The crowd would break up into groups according to their age and interest. The men built camp fires. Each group would have a fire of it's own. We - the children- would have a camp fire of our own too; even Fraulein and Undina would not be with us. Peter would get our lobsters from the boiling water.

Exhausted by the days activity we would sit quietly sucking lobster claws, watching the fires along the beach; each absorbed in his own thoughts or dreams.

Following the period of "drunkenness", part of our daily occupation was the building of sand castles and railroads on the beach. I tried to reproduce a model of Lake Baikal with all the proposed railroad tunnels which were to be constructed. Finally I decided that the construction of a swinging bridge would be much more exciting. I pictured a high, elegant bridge connecting the shores of lake Baikal. Thus I developed the idea that one day I



would become an engineer, measure the depth of the lake, and swing a bridge from shore to shore. The idea that strongly affected my future and guided the initial steps of my youth.





We returned to Harbin from Okeanskaya when autumn was in its full glory and the golden elm trees were shedding their foliage. The leaves drifted down to earth slowly, like yellow butterflies.

Nina and Cathy were enrolled at the new Russian grammar school which had just opened in Harbin.

As the hot spell was over, mother suggested showing grandmother the surrounding Chinese towns and temples.

Grandmother immediately decided that this would be very educational and proposed that I be taken along. Mother replied :- "You can certainly bring her if you wish. However, there will be no other children with us. Do you think she will enjoy the excursion

Naturally, I was delighted to go. Thus my first acquaintance with the destitution, misery and filth of life began.

Even now, scenes of the poverty of China pass in procession before my eyes. The one street village, the brown mud huts with no windows, the dusty unpaved road spotted with dung, the swarms of flies and gnats.

The yellow Chinese faces of the crowd stared at us unblinkingly in complete despair and hate. Chinese children in patched clothes followed us without a smile - only hunger reflected in their eyes.

We passed through village after village - all equally poor, miserable and filthy.

We entered the market street of a town where a pig was being roasted over an open fire surrounded by a swarm of flies. A group of Chinese children with watering mouths waited for discarded bones. The flies entered their eyes, mouths and noses.



Two dirty, starving donkeys walked endlessly round and round turning a stone grinding soya beans.

Chinese coolies in stained, blue cotton, carried heavy burdens suspended from the ends of a pole which they balanced on their shoulders. Women with tiny bound feet - babies on their backs - pushed heavily laden two-wheeled carts.

All along the street were rickshaws occupied by sleek, well fed Chinese in silken gowns, pulled by emaciated, yet wiry, coolies.

Spotches of cow and donkey dung decorated the dusty road.

Finally we approached a high wall of concrete blocks with an iron gate. The soldiers stationed at the gate led us into a courtyard with golden elm trees and a marble pool filled with fresh water for the goldfish. The house at the back of the courtyard was decorated with carved dragons painted black, gold and red. Exotic flowers and plants were visible through the large windows.

All this made a striking contrast to the street we had just left behind us.

A Chinese dressed in brocade silk bowed low to us as we entered a large room where the furniture was of carved blackwood and gray marble. This was a silk shop. Aromatic jasmine tea was served to us before the owner displayed his merchandise. The merchant's delicate hands, with long yellow fingers and long white nails, lovingly unfolded roll after roll of fine silk.

He was also the possessor of ivory, porcelain and china shops in town. He had many soldiers and owned most of the town and neighboring villages. He sent a soldier to guide us to his other shops, the slim pagoda and Chinese temple.

We walked along the dirty streets of the town among



hungry people. The sweet, sickening smell of opium followed us everywhere.

Through the shadow of poverty I saw the magnificence of Chinese art, clearly illustrated in carved ivory and the artistic designs on large, heavy Chinese vases.

A Chinese temple beyond the filthy town, appeared before me like a mirage of fresh water in a hot, dry, desert. I saw the figures of two stone tigers guarding the carved gates; a priest in a black robe bowed to us. An aromatic cloud of burning incense rose before Buddah placed in a richly decorated niche.

Carved figures of the gods of Laughter, Water and Fire, stood next to Buddah. Only the light of candles burning in a chandelier in front of the sanctuary, illuminated the interior of the temple. The art of an old civilisation was reflected in the carving of the gods and in the dragons painted on the outside walls of the temple.

I was cold inside. I could only see all this magnificence through the haze of daily Chinese life which we had just left behind us; only through the pervading smell of opium. The beauty of Chinese art, which is talked about so much, is but a tiny spark along a filthy road.

I do not think that at that time I actually comprehended the horror of economic corruption in China. The facts were merely recorded on my mind as on a photographic plate, to haunt me later.

Our excursion lasted two or three weeks. The group consisted of eight or ten people, predominantly women, mother's friends.

We travelled in our railroad car, attached to goods trains, mostly by night. During the day we tramped the streets of



~~During the day we tramped the streets of towns~~ and villages, visited art and jewel shops, refineries, restaurants, or went far into the mountains in search of temples and pagodas. To me it was like a nightmare - the change from beauty to horror, from light to darkness.

One night, during this period of travel, I dreamed that I was lost in the streets of a Chinese town. Grandmother was nowhere. I searched, but could not find her.

I awoke and could not hear her breathing. My first thought was that she had left me as grandfather had. In dismay I cried "Grandmother, grandmother!" She quickly left her berth and came to me.

Realising my error, I was ashamed of my fear. Pushing my pillow to the floor, I told her that I had lost it and was uncomfortable.

She replaced the pillow under my head, straightened the covers and blessed me. I went back to sleep. From that night on, I often woke in the night to listen to her breathing. Sometimes I could not hear her and would call out in fear and dismay. This continued for many years, right up to the last day of her life.





Time passed by; the temperature dropped to below freezing. The elm trees stood bare with arms outstretched. The ground was covered with dry yellow leaves which crackled underfoot. Most of the birds had gone south and only sparrows, crows and ravens remained in the park. A cold wind was blowing from the north, there was no snow on the ground - the earth was dry and cracked.

Warmly dressed in fur lined coats, fur hats with flaps tied under our chins, high fur boots on our feet, we spent most of our day in the park.

Father had called in the fire department to transform our croquet lawn and some of the paths, into a skating rink.

The house was warm, bright and gay. There were more people inside, more music, more laughter and more songs. Formal dinners were given almost every night.

Pots of blooming chrysanthemums were brought in to decorate the house. They were everywhere, in every room - on tables, on the floor along the walls and on the windowsills.

Storm windows were put up and the windows sealed. To our great regret nobody could climb through the windows any more.

Christmas was approaching Our nursery was crowded with children busy gluing long chains from gold and silver paper and painting walnuts gold for the Christmas tree.

There were preparations for a series of parties and masquerades. We too were to attend the masquerade and our costumes were made in the nursery by a dressmaker.

Christmas Eve was here - as customary, the doors to the drawing room were closed. There was excitement in the air. Everybody hoped for snow so that we could go for a sleigh ride in the moonlight.



Everybody talked about parties, masquerades, presents and the Christmas tree. Nobody mentioned the Nativity Star or the Holy Infant in Bethlehem.

Outside, darkness surrounded the house; the elm trees cracked and moaned under the pressure of a strong north wind.

Sounds of music came from the drawing room; the doors were suddenly opened. In the center of the room a tall, symmetrical Christmas tree glittered and shone in all its beauty, the light of its candles reflected in the silver and gold decorations. It was the most magnificent Christmas tree I had ever seen.

Most of the furniture had been moved out of the drawing room. All along the walls booths, filled with toys and decorated with evergreen, were arranged. Each booth had a child's name before it and contained everything a child could desire - everything that money could buy. There were skates, sleighs, bicycles, wagons, puppet shows, magic lanterns, cameras etc.

I started to move towards my booth and stopped - something was wrong. This was Christmas, but there were no joyful chimes of ~~the~~ bells wafting on the air. This was just a party, the people were playing at Christmas, as we so often played at being hunters, robbers Indians or engineers. This was not real, the "Spirit of Christmas" was not there. I turned towards a window looking for the Nativity Star. The sky looked different to what it was in Simbirsk, I could not find the star. A strange chill passed over me.

Mother had been watching me. "What is the matter with you? Are you not pleased with your presents and the Christmas tree?". I could not answer. I myself could not understand why the gaiety had suddenly left me. I looked for grandmother, she was not there. So



instead of answering I asked "Where is grandmother?". We both left the room looking for her.

We found her lying on her bed sobbing into the pillow.

"Oh, Mama", mother said "I have tried so hard to entertain you, to make you happy".

"Yes, Marguerite", grandmother replied "however, I am not a gypsy to go tramping the streets of Chinese towns or go chasing back and forth between Vladivostok and Mukden. I have never, in all my sixty years of life, seen such crazy people and such crazy living. All I long for is a home, let it be humble and small, but let it have warmth and love. Here I do not even know where I am. Is this an international hostel, a hotel or a club. I do not know how many servants there are in the house. They are all alike, they all have the same name "Boy". They move without a sound and suddenly appear here or there. I would say there was only one if I did not see them appearing in pairs - exactly alike - at two different ends of the corridor. Sometimes I think they are the ghosts of old Chinese ancestors. I no longer can stand these yellow immobile Chinese faces without any expression.

I do not even know how many grandchildren I have. I go into the nursery - a dozen children jump on my neck calling me 'grandmother'. Just yesterday, while having breakfast with Andrew, I asked him who were all these children in the park. He replied "Heaven only knows. Do they disturb you? If they do, we will make them stay further away from the house. As far as I am concerned, the more children, the more dogs, the more horses are in the yard, the merrier is life."

You know Marguerite, sometimes I wonder whether you know which of these children are yours. You are never here, I only see you at



dinner or when we are travelling".

"Oh, Mama", mother began, "I am very busy. We have just opened a Russo-Chinese orphanage. I am the president. I interview dozens of women a day, who bring children to be placed in the orphanage. We have no room for all of them. I have to decide whom to accept. The institution is not completely organized. There is the question of the budget. There is so much these children need. They are hungry, neglected and abused. My children have everything. They have Fraulein and Undina to look after them. They have good food five times a day, good beds, are warmly dressed. They have their own nursery and the park to play in. Look at the pets they have, dogs, deer, a pony, rabbits, without even counting the birds and frogs they adopt. They are free and have never been abused. They do not need me. The children I am trying to place and adjust, have nothing but abuse.

"Well, Marguerite", grandmother replied, "this is your home and your life. I do not want to interfere. I would like to go home to Simbirsk where I can hear the church bells, where the spirit of Michael Nicholaevitch is waiting for me. I would like to live the life I know and understand - to plan our meals with Natasha, the cook; to know where the young maid - Masha spends her evening off - to see that she does not get into trouble. They are a part of my family.

The thing that worries me at present is Lialia. Would you let her go with me, or would you rather keep her here? I just can not leave her alone in this house".

Mother dried her tears and replied "Mama, I would do anything for you. I cannot decide for Lialia. It is her life and the decision should be hers".

I suddenly heard the church chime over Simbirsk; I saw the





streets of Simbirsk covered with fresh white snow, golden crosses glittered on the blue and golden domes.

I put my arms around grandmother's neck and said "Grandmother, let us go home".

"That settles it" mother said "when do you wish to go? Would you at least remain for the holidays and meet the New Year with us?"

We stayed over the holidays and left in the middle of January.



After we left the Manchurian border, the temperature dropped to below 40 C. The air felt fresh and raw. Snow laden branches of the mighty Siberian cedars bent low under the weight of long, sparkling icicles, through which the winter sun refracted, transforming each tree in-to a multi-coloured, shimmering Christmas tree. The Siberian forest stood <sup>silent,</sup> an enchanted paradise. All the creatures of the woods ~~xxx~~ asleep, even the sprites, all except Puck, who still roamed about.

Thinking of the bears and deer, deep in slumber under their blankets of snow, I too would become sliipy. Lying quietly on my berth, I would listen to the rythm of the train, and the voice of my grandmother reading some tale from Greek mythology.

The Manchurian episode seemed far, far away. Intoxicating freedom, beauty and gaiety were but a dream to be suddenly frozen still as if by a cold underground current running under the house.

We reached Simbirsk on a bright Sunday morning- the sound of church bells filled the air. Golden crosses shon and glittered in the snow. A new period of my life began. I was now 8½ years old.

During this period two new people entered the current of my existence, my new teacher Sophia Alexandrovna Fekhner and our new maid Matrieshka.

Sophia Alexandrovna was all intellect, mystery and religion; Matriesha - all gaiety, laughter and reality.

Sophia Alexandrovna was tall and thin with dark, tragic eyes set deeply in her pale, narrow face.

Matriesha was strawberry and cream, with twinkling



brown eyes and full red lips, a heavy braid of golden hair reached below her waist.

Sophia Alexandrovna, a woman in her forties, had been a teacher of Russian literature in a grammar school prior to her marriage. Late in life she married a rich successful business man, but unfortunately their happiness only lasted five years as Mr. Fekhner died suddenly from a heart attack.

Sophia Alexandrovna had always been very religious, upon the death of her husband, she donated all her money and property to a convent in which she took orders intending to follow the teachings of Christ. Her expectations of serving God and humanity in the convent were not fulfilled. Among the other members of the convent she found only hypocrisy, greed, envy and gossip. She discovered, just a little too late, that for her, life at the convent was intolerable.

One stormy winter night Sophia Alexandrovna put on her civilian clothes and left the convent, which was a few miles outside the town. In the darkness Sophia Alexandrovna lost her way and was almost buried in snow when a passing coachman picked her up in the morning. She was taken to a county hospital with a severe case of pneumonia. Finally some distant relatives took her into their own home.

When we returned to Simbirsk, Sophia Alexandrovna was desperately looking for any type of employment that would provide her with a means of existence. Being a deserter from a convent she could no longer be classified as a school teacher.

Some of Grandmother's friends recommended her as a very capable teacher and a lover of children.



Thus Sophia Alexandrovna entered our home and occupied a small room in our cosy apartment. She was very reserved, seldom talked to anyone, including grandmother. With me she was very patient, always ready to explain anything I did not understand, always trying to comprehend my thoughts - to find out where my interests lay.

On a still, clear winter night, Sophia Alexandrovna and I admired silvery-white frost glistening on a pole by moonlight, on a stormy night - the silver veil of wind driven snowflakes. In the summer we watched the sunrise over the river, fish playing in the cool waters of an early morning. At midnight we listened to the nightingale pouring out its song on the still warm air.

It was Sophia Alexandrovna who told me about the life of the Holy Infant born in Bethlehem, his childhood, manhood, his love for people and his teachings. She told me that Jesus had come to this world to bring us eternal life. He had loved, taught and prayed and for that he had been crucified. In a few simple words she explained his teachings, sufferings, his understanding of the people and his forgiveness. She said "Jesus loved the human race with all its defects, ignorance and cruelty. Being God, he rose from the dead and is still among us because of his everlasting love". "Whenever you are in trouble or lost Lola" she continued, "just stretch out your hand to Jesus and he will lead you from the thorny path to the open road".

Although Sophia Alexandrovna never went to church, it was because of her that I understood the significance of the Easter Service.





The first Easter after our return from Harbin, grandmother decided that I was old enough to attend the Easter Midnight Service.

We left home at about 11 p.m. walking, as usual, to a convent nearby. The night was dark, with only the stars twinkling far away in the sky. Spring had come early that year, the snow had already melted, there were streams of water swirling everywhere and a fresh spring scent was in the air.

The church was dark and chilly when we entered, only a few candles burned in front of the icons; no sound of bells disturbed the air. The priest in dark vestments read a description of the last days of the life of Jesus, in a low monotonous voice.

It was the first time that the church appeared to be a catacomb like. There was no light in the faces of the saints on the icons - Jesus was dead.

Then the procession depicting the search for the body of Jesus began. The somberly clad priest carrying a large, long candle moved towards the church door, followed by gofaloniers with banners and the congregation, walking in pairs with lighted candles in their hands. Grandmother and I were ~~immediately~~ just behind the gofaloniers; a long row of candles, twisting like a snake, followed us. We walked through the church grounds, into the church basement, along the long dark passages, looking into every small damp cell. Finally we returned to the church, not a whisper was to be heard in the crowd - we had not found the body.

Suddenly the doors of the sanctuary opened, bright lights illuminated the church, and the priest now dressed in



in gold and silver, carrying a gold cross in his hand, proclaimed "Christ has risen from the dead". Easter chimes spread through the air and a chorus of nuns repeated after him "Christ has risen from the dead ....." with voices so clear and pure, that they carried every man, woman and child, including me, to Heaven to kneel before the pedestal of the resurrected Jesus.

At that moment I loved Jesus with all my soul, with all my heart and was ready to serve and love humanity for His sake.



During this period I began to study Russian classical literature with Sophia Alexandrovna - Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky etc. I read Victor Hugo in French with grandmother as well as the Russian translations of other foreign classics such as Dickens. With Grandmother I went to the opera, drama and ballet.

In this atmosphere of intellectual education, Matresha was my delight and reward. (dessert?)

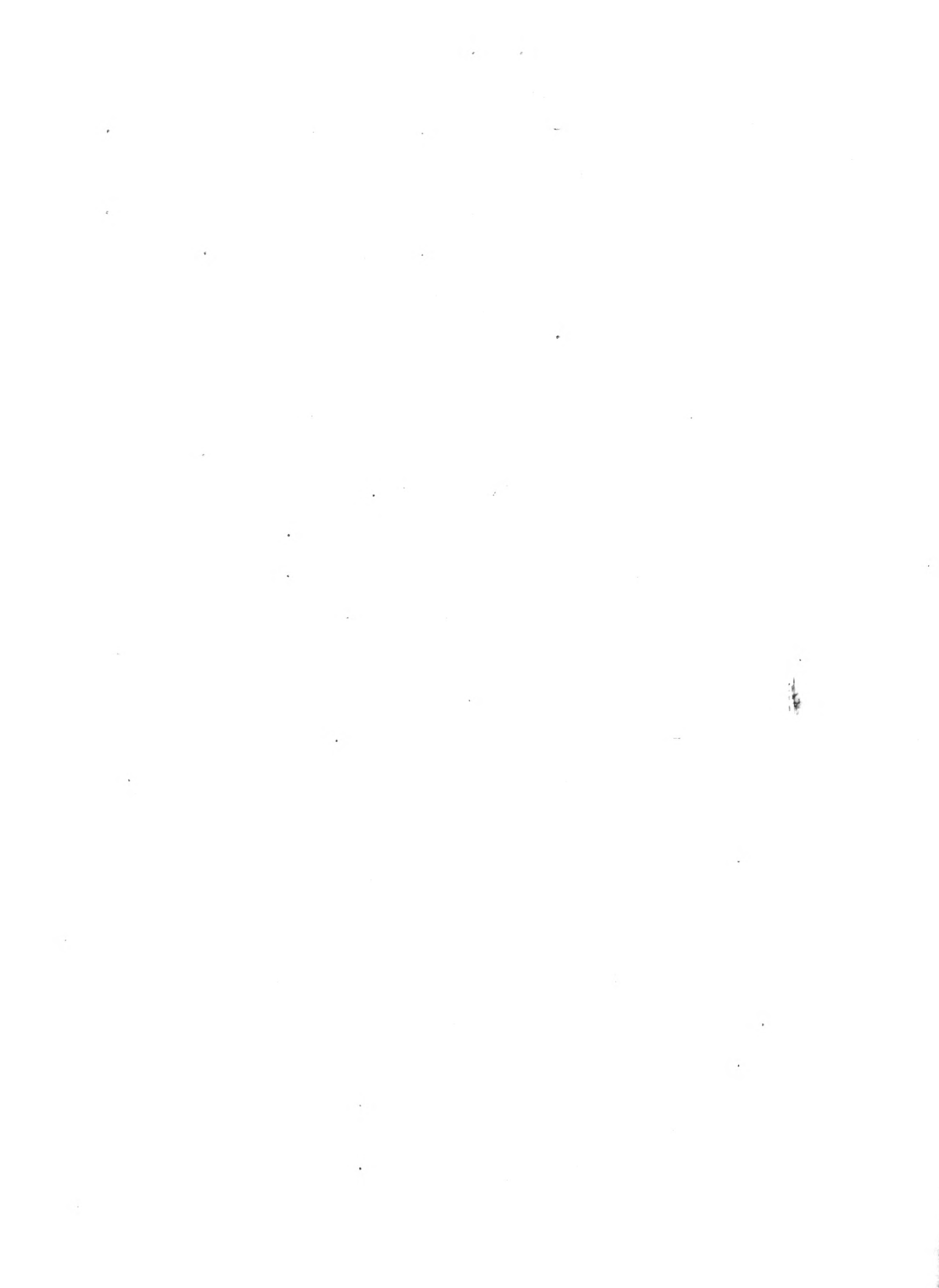
Matresha was only sixteen, and had come to us straight from a village. She was the niece of Avdotia, a peasant woman from across the Volga and a friend of our cook Natasha. Matresha wanted to become a maid and live in town. Natasha was willing to teach her and grandmother willing to try her. So Matresha joined our household and became my great friend.

She was a mixture of superstition, curiosity and common sense. She would never allow a crow to croak over our house - for this was an omen of disaster, nor would she let a black cat cross her path - she would rather turn back. She would listen for the call of a cuckoo, for that was the sign of a wedding. She knew how to interpret dreams and could read one's fortune in tea leaves.

It was one thing to walk with Sophia Alexandrovna admiring the beauties of nature, to watch the development of buds, the growth of plants; it was quite another matter to walk with Matresha. She ridiculed high heeled shoes and giggled at the fancy hats. Stopping at the windows of a bakery she would admire sweet rolls and marvel at French pastries.

Together we played snowballs on cold winter days and stole lilacs from the city park in spring.

Matresha introduced me to the life of village children,



the picking of berries in the woods for preserves and the gathering of mushrooms in the autumn, which were dried, salted and stored for food in the long cold winter months ahead.

Shortly after our return from Harbin, Grandmother received a letter from grandfather's sister asking us to come for a visit as she was getting old and felt her time in this world was short. She wrote that she would like to us before she departed.

Grandmother decided that we should go.

Early in the summer we left Sophia Alexandrovna, Natasha and Matresha at home and started on the journey.

We took a train to Moscow where we stayed for a couple of weeks with grandmother's friends.

It gave me a tremendous thrill to see the old Russian capital which was so familiar to me through the history of Russia, legends and songs; to walk and ride along the streets of Moscow, to see the Kremlin walls, blue and golden cupolas showing above it; to visit the old mosaic churches; to listen to the church bells of Moscow and the sound of horses hooves along the wooden pavements.

I suddenly realized that for me Moscow was the symbol of Russia and that I loved Moscow as I loved Matresha - the symbol of the Russian people.

My great aunt lived alone on an old estate, not far from Moscow, in an old two-storied house surrounded by a dark forest. All I could remember of the place was the long avenue of linden trees leading from the house to the forest, a continual buzzing of bees, the smell of honey, and the bats in the attic.

A small village lay about a mile from the house. The village children brought wild berries and mushrooms for sale, and recalling Matresha's stories of village life, I went to the woods





with these children.

To the dismay of both my grandmother and great aunt, I spent most of my time with the children either in the woods or in the village listening to the tales of an old man @ - the grandfather of the village.

The life of freedom I had ~~xxx~~<sup>lost</sup> in Manchuria had a strong hold on me and I guarded it with all my might. There was not much grandmother could do about it - I began to have my way.

This situation disturbed Grandmother who continued to worry about my future, my growth and education. She feared that she would die before I reached maturity and that I would have difficulty in adjusting to life in Harbin.

We returned home by way of the Volga. One evening sitting on the open deck of the Volga steamer, grandmother told me that every one had a certain pattern of life - routine and tradition.

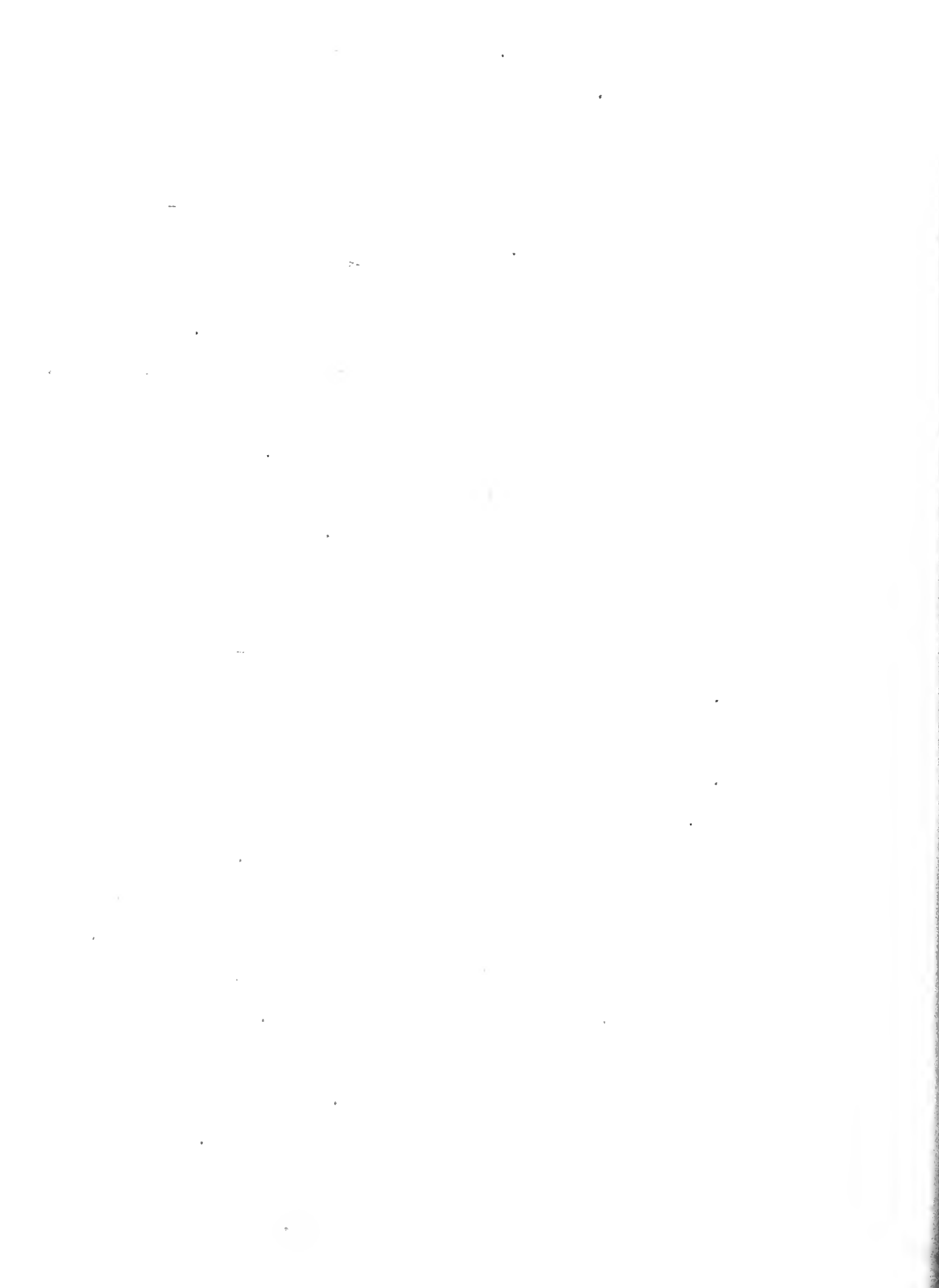
"Our life" she said " was interrupted by grandfather's departure. It is now time to reorganize it according to our needs and desires. I thought we could live with Marguerite in Harbin, but old roots are deep and old traditions strong. I could not change my habits or my character, nor do I wish to do so".

She stopped for a second and looked over the Volga.

The first star had appeared in the sky, a few lights showed on the bank. The river flowed quietly by.

she turned her soft, gray eyes on me and continued:

"You are very young my darling. It is possible that you may have to adjust to the life of your parents. I think that it would be easier for you if the adjustment took place gradually, therefore I have decided, that beginning ~~with~~ next year we will--



visit Manchuria every summer. Really, it is not as far as it appears to be. We have done it once, we can do it again and again. The conditions on the Siberian railway are improving daily. The line around Lake Baikal has been completed. A second track across Siberia may be completed by next year so it will take us much less time to reach Harbin than it did last year. However, grandfather would like you to have your roots in Russia. He loved his country, his first duty was to Russia and the Emperor, then to his family, therefore on the way to Harbin we will take short trips along the Volga and visit old estates".

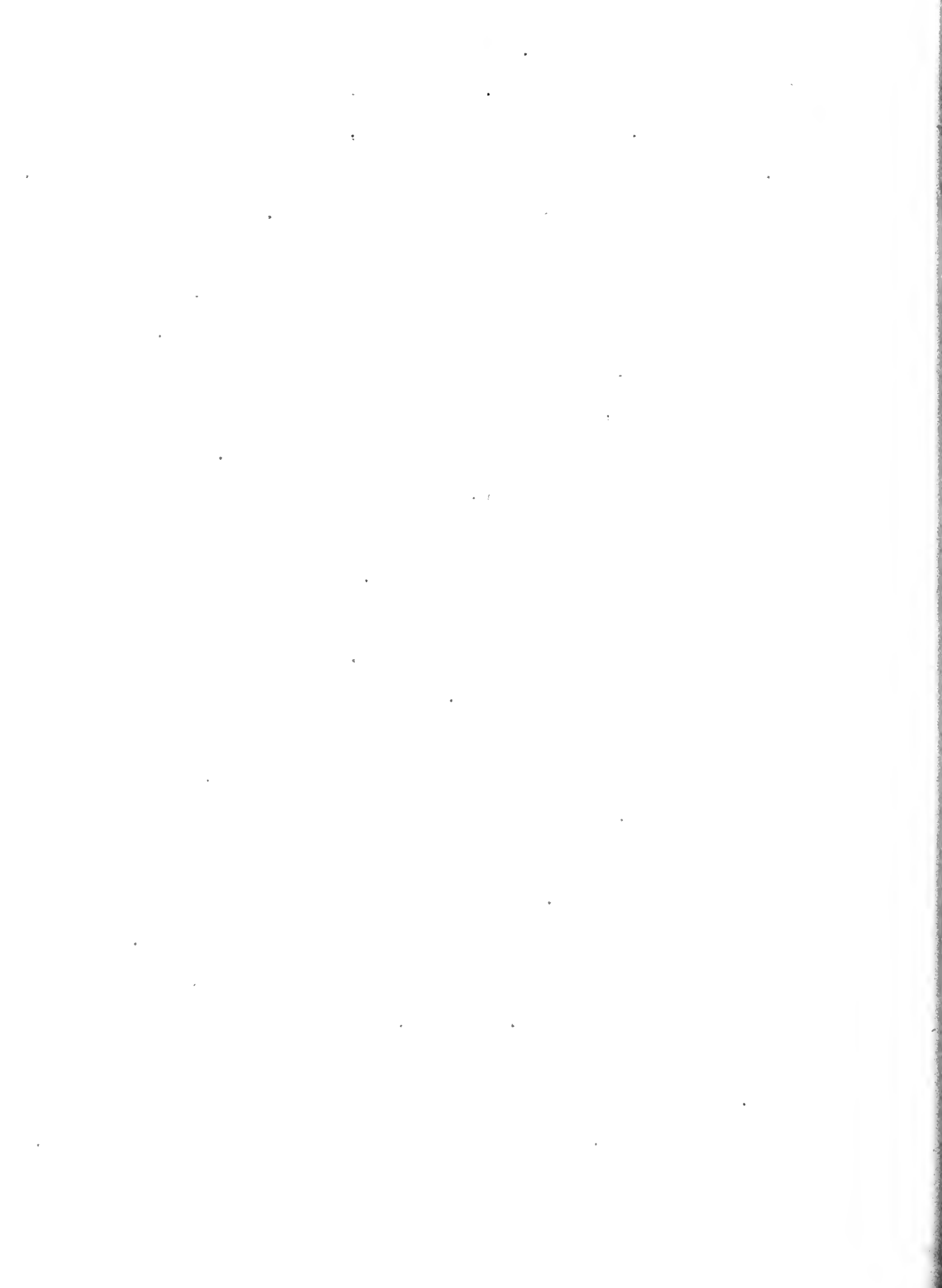
Excitedly I jumped up, threw my arms around grandmother's neck kissing her, messing up her white hair and leaving fingerprints on the white collar of her black dress.

My life began to flow along a definite channel and continued that way for the next four years. There were no monotonous or dull periods in my existence. During the winter I studied at a Russian grammar school in Simbirsk; read and prepared my lessons with Sophia Alexandrovna and had fun with Matreshka. Every summer we visited Harbin. I loved our trips along the Volga and never tired of watching the familiar scenery of Siberia from the top step of our railway carriage.

I lived in a world of love, beauty and security. I knew of another world from books - the world of injustice, hypocrisy, hunger, misery and disease. For me, that other world was far away from reality - just another page from the Tales of the Arabian Nights". During this period of my life a tiny cloud marred my azure sky just once, indicating that this other world might exist.

I remember this incident clearly.

It was the last week of Lent and I was on my way to



Confession at the church. Easter was late that year. The snow had melted and the fruit trees were brightly dressed. The sun had just disappeared beyond the bank of the Volga. A light gray mist was rising above the town and a soft breeze blew from the river. It seemed to me that earth itself was inhaling the fragrant scent of spring.

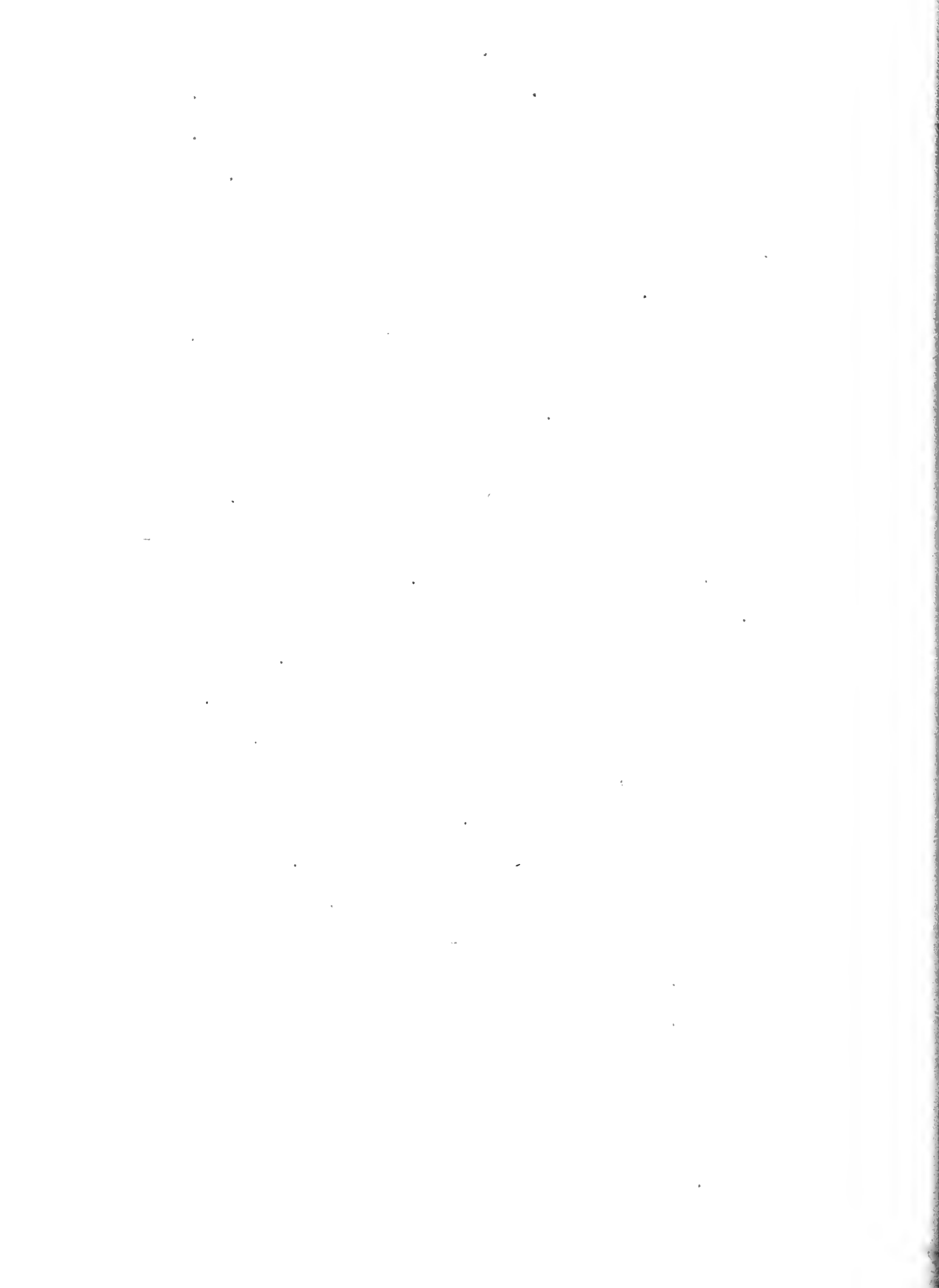
I was going to Confession - to be cleansed, to enable me to rejoice with the angels in the Resurrection of Jesus at the Easter midnight service.

During this past year I had been studying the Bible and the principles of orthodoxy at the grammar school. The whole week I had talked so much to Sophia Alexandrovna about Jesus - His teachings, His last days on earth, His suffering and His Resurrection.

I tried very hard to recall my sins. I remembered stealing lilac from the city park the previous year, teasing Natasha when she was not in a mood to be teased, losing my temper with Medor, just because grandmother had not allowed me to go out due to the cold weather.

The church was dark when I entered. Only a few votive lights were burning in front of the icons. The confession booth was small, dark and mysterious - illuminated only by the light of a tiny candle. I closed my eyes and began to enumerate my sins to the priest. I do not know what possessed me, but unexpectedly I opened my eyes and caught the eyes of the priest fixed on my half opened hand holding a silver rouble in payment for the Confession

/ FOOT NOTE: ) Payments were voluntary and usually ran from 5 kopeks to a rouble./



The clergyman was not interested in my confession. He, who for me, had been a substitute for one of the disciples of Jesus - my spiritual leader, was only interested in the silver piece in my hand. I knew the the life of Jesus had been sold for thirty silver pieces. I recalled grandfather's words:

"Greed is the core of all evil"

A shiver passed over my spine. Was the world of the books a reality? Slowly I put the rouble on the table and left the church.

The night was dark. I did not look at the sky and did not hear the whisper of spring.

I wanted to talk to Sophia Alexandrovna, but Matreshka met me with a basket of colored eggs. She came from the kitchen leaving the door open. The appetizing smell of baked ham and roast goose reached my nostrils. Natasha had been preparing food for the Easter holidays. I went into the kitchen with Matreshka and forgot my disillusionment at the church, but a small black dot remained deep in my mind. It grew as I grew. Small and insignificant had been the incident in the church, yet, much later in my youth - when I was very quick to criticize and dismiss, but not so quick to understand, analyse and forgive, this small incident was one of the first impulses that lead me to reject church and religion.





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PART II

The second great change in my life took place in 1912, when I was thirteen years old.

I remember that January 27th, a cold winter's night. Sophia Alexandrovna and I were returning from a birthday party. The snow crunched under foot, the air was still, and the sky was dark, dark blue, almost black. The stars shon brightly.

We were late coming home; and as we approached the house I noticed that a small lamp had been placed in the entrance hall window, the rest of the house was in semidarkness. Something was wrong. Grandmother always waited up for me with all the lamps in the house burning brightly. My heart contracted and I rushed into the house.

Grandmother had been playing cards that night and had collapsed at the card table. One of her friends had sent Matresha for the doctor and was awaiting his arrival.

Grandmother had had a heart attack. For two long weeks it was "touch and go".

The doctor ordered Grandmother's bed moved into our dining room where there was more space, air and sunshine.

Two trained nurses stayed with her day and night; the doctor called three times a day.

I did not go to school. Most of the time I sat still in the corner of the dining room waiting for the worst, or staring through the window at the white snow which hurt my eyes. During the long sleepless nights I waited for the morning to come.

Natasha and Matresha whispered behind my back. Sophia Alexandrovna evaded my eyes. The doctor looked very grim.

I suddenly realized that Grandmother and not I, was the essence of the house. She was out of order and we were like sheep without a shepherd.

After three weeks she seemed to be much better; the doctor was smiling. Grandmother, although in bed, took charge of the house. She sent me to school, gave orders to Natasha and scolded Matresha.

During this period of three long weeks, I learned how much I loved and needed her. With her recovery I entered a period of hope, happiness and joy.

It lasted only eight short days. On the ninth day, returning from school I found the doctor in our house again. Grandmother had had a stroke, her left side was paralyzed and she was unconscious.

The doctor told me that Grandmother's condition was critical and he was telegraphing my mother. He was our family doctor and had been a friend ever since I could remember.

The long hours of waiting in the corner of the dining room began again. Again Natasha and Matresha whispered behind my back and Sophia Alexandrovna evaded my eyes. This time it had little effect on me, I only noticed it. I was waiting for "Death" to enter our house. At night, lying in my bed, I waited for this mysterious, unknown "Death" to strike our home at any moment. This was something I had faced before, but something I still could not understand, could not comprehend.

Twelve days later, on March 11th, entering the dining room in the morning, I saw the nurse showing Natasha bluish-black spots on Grandmother's legs. She suggested that the priest should be called in since "the end was near".

The priest arrived half an hour later, and Grandmother received the Last Sacrament. I was standing near the head of her bed. Suddenly Grandmother opened her eyes, smiled at me, lifted her right arm and touched my cheek. The next moment her arm dropped and her head tilted on her pillow.

The next few days were like a dream. I remember Ekaterina Alexeievna, a close friend of our family, taking me to their home; the hurriedly fitted and sewn mourning dress; the first Mass for Grandmother.

I felt I was an empty shell with a piece of ice at the center, only my eyes hurt.

I recalled the fairy tale of "The Snow Queen" who had carried a small boy away to the North Pole. She had frozen his heart and his soul. He became an automat, only his eyes hurt because of the tears which were frozen under his eyelids. I wondered if that was what had happened to me.

At the first Mass, my teeth began to chatter; I noticed that the burning candle in my hand was swinging like the pendulum of our old clock; my knees began to tremble and I was shaking all over.

Ekaterina Alexeievna took me back to their home. I remember the doctor pouring some medicine into my mouth, then complete darkness enveloped me.

When I opened my eyes, Ekaterina Alexeievna was trying to feed me warm broth from a teaspoon. She told me that I had been in a coma for four days and that my aunt Olga would be arriving the following week to take me home to Harbin.

Two days later the doctor let me out of bed. I went back home to see Sophia Alexandrovna and Natasha. Matresha had been discharged already and had returned to her village.

When I reached the house, the window blinds were down, the doors which had always been open to me, were locked. There was nobody home. The house looked cold and forbidding, as if the spirit of death was still flying above it.

I realized that Grandmother

Looking in dismay at my old home,

was out of my life, that I was <sup>losing</sup> ~~leaving~~ my home, Sophia Alexandrovna, Matroscha, Natasha and all my friends with whom I had grown up and gone to school. I was losing Simbirsk.

It seemed to me that the ground had suddenly been swept from under my feet. I was left all alone, I stood very still. I had no tears.

Gray dusk stretched its wings over the town, the church bells chimed. This was goodbye Simbirsk.

WITHOUT RUDDER OR SAILED

My aunt Olga arrived in Simbirsk on March 23rd, and on March 30th we left for Harbin. We travelled by "The Direct Express Train" from Simbirsk to Harbin, with only one change at Cheliabinsk. There was a restaurant car on the train, where we took our meals.

All through the long days of our trip I stood at the window pretending to be absorbed by the scenery. I did not wish to disturb my aunt, nor did I wish to be bothered by her. She was still young and was surrounded by male companions.

For the first time in my life, looking through the window, I did not notice the Ural Mountains, the Siberian woods nor Lake Baikal. Pictures of the past floated before my eyes. I saw dusk descending over the town and heard Grandmother's voice telling fairy tales. I saw Grandfather, Katie and me returning home after a sleigh ride, Grandmother waiting for us with hot chocolate. I saw myself standing at the rail of the Volga steamer, the sun disappearing behind the high bank of the river. I felt Grandmother's arm on my shoulder; I heard her asking what I would like to have for supper. I re-lived our trips along the Volga, over and over again, as well as the journeys to Manchuria. I saw Lophia Alexandrovna and Matriesha waving to us from the wharf on the Volga. I saw the streets of Simbirsk, I heard the chime of the bells.

At night in my berth I would hear the rythm of the train wheels continuously repeating: "he is gone! gone! gone!..... you are alone! alone! alone!... I would plug my ears with my fingers, shut my eyes tight and hope that I would go to sleep never to wake up again.

Three weeks later my father met us in Harbin. He gave me a large box of chocolate creams and said "Welcome home".

Dimitry with the three horses harnessed abreast, was waiting for us at the station. It was late in the evening, and dark clouds were gathering in the sky.

My father and aunt talked about horses and horse races. My thoughts flew back to Simbirsk.

We reached the house at 11 p.m. The evening meal was in progress. It was an informal gathering of friends around the table (Foot note: Dinner was always served at 6 p.m.) The courses were not being served, the food had simply been placed on the table. There were hot pies, cold ham, turkey, roast beef; cheese, bread and butter, plenty of wine and tea.

The room was gay and full of guests.

Mother suggested that I should have something to eat before going to bed. Natasha, Tania and Serge were already asleep. Nina and Katie were at the table. They moved over and made room for me. After that I was forgotten. Everybody was talking, every one had his or her own interests.

Mother glanced at me accidentally. "You should have been in bed long ago" she said. I told her that I did not know where my bed was. "Have you forgotten where the nursery is? Nina will show it to you" she replied, and turned back to continue an interrupted discussion. Nina took me to the nursery where a fourth bed had been placed. Tania and Serge were asleep. Natasha was in bed, but waiting for me. She was glad to see me and turned the electric light switch on and off to amuse me. By that time I knew what electricity was, but was not accustomed to the bright light and it hurt my eyes. She finally went to sleep while I lay down quietly thinking about my home coming. I knew now that I really was alone; nobody cared whether I was here or not, nobody wanted me. It was Tatiana Nenco, rather than time, ~~the~~ who brought me back to life. Quickly and unintentionally she conveyed to me that "Life is fun if you do not weaken".

I remember my first meeting with Tatiana; her immediate winning of my admiration. It happened during my first visit to Harbin. Nina,

Katie and I were lying on the grass under a shady tree in our park. Tatiana came galloping up to us on her Arabian horse, dressed in her Georgian riding habit. To me she was a heroine from Georgia, straight out of the story Grandmother had been reading to me.

Although Tatiana was my age, at that time she was more a friend of Mina and Katie. During my later visits to Harbin, ~~Tatiana~~ <sup>she</sup> was a constant visitor ~~to our park~~ - the leader of all our games. However, my stays were short and I always remained an outsider, a special privileged guest, so that Tatiana was still friendlier with Mina and Katie.

Tatiana's father, Nikolai Ivanovich Henka had been a staff member of the railway company, her mother Alexandra Petrovna, had been married twice and had two grown daughters by her previous marriage before she met Nikolai Ivanovich.

Tatiana was their only child and the ~~soul~~ <sup>pivot</sup> of their existence.

Being a passionate horseman Nikolai Ivanovich taught Tatiana to ride a pony when she was three years old, when she became his constant companion. On her sixth birthday he gave her the Arabian horse.

He died when she was seven.

Money came easily to the staff members of the railway company and was spent lavishly so that - as was quite customary in Harbin at that time - ~~upon his death Nikolai Ivanovich left his wife penniless.~~ <sup>his widow was left</sup> she was obliged to work to support Tatiana. It was the policy of the company to provide employment for the needy widows of their employees and so Alexandra Petrovna ~~was employed as a secretary at the railway~~ <sup>obtained a secretarial position</sup> company office.

The house assigned to Nikolai Ivanovich during his employment was large, and as he was a very generous man and considered his two step daughters as a part of his family, even though one

As far as I was concerned, I had landed in the midst of chaos and was confused. My wound, caused by Grandmother's death, was hurting me. Life would have been unbearable if it had not been for Tatiana.

Beginning with that first day after my arrival, she always had some new idea, some plan of action which would carry me away from thoughts of either the present or the past.



of them was married and the other divorced, he invited both step-daughters and son-in-law, Vladimir Stepanovich Smirnoff, to live with them. After his death, the house was assigned jointly to his widow, Alexandra Petrovna and her son-in-law because according to company rules based on employee status, neither one of them qualified for a house of that size separately.

Now Olga Ivanovna Smirnoff, the married daughter, decided she was mistress of the house.

There had always been friction between Tatiana and her older sisters who were extremely jealous and considered her a spoilt brat. Tatiana, who was Alexandra Petrovna's idol, naturally resented the change, refused to accept Olga Ivanovna's authority, and soon won complete independence and freedom. To avoid friction at home she spent most of her time with us.

Tatiana was very talented and had a tremendous sense of humour. At the age of twelve she wrote satirical poems on the daily life of Harbin society. Her drawings of animals, horses, dogs and cats won the admiration of painters. She was always full of life and mischief and had many bright ideas.

The morning after my return to Harbin Tatiana came into the nursery. It was the last week of lent and the spring vacation. The storm windows had been removed and preparations for the Easter festivities were in full swing. Pots of hyacinths, narcissi and tulips were being brought into the house. The Chinese servants were rushing back and forth along the long corridor.

We were dyeing eggs when she clambered through the window and joined in our activity. She found our paints and brushes and started to paint the eggs by hand. After completing a couple she remarked that it would be very original to have a basket of small eggs, Bantam ones

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size on the past

for example. These being unavailable, Tatiana decided that crow eggs would do.

So Tatiana, Tania and I set off in search of crow eggs.

No crows were allowed to nest in the park, but at the end of our vegetable garden was a row of twenty four huge elms separating it from the corn field. In our household this area was known as "The Crow Estate", and no nests were allowed to be destroyed. Here the crows lived undisturbed except for an occasional raid by us for their eggs or fledgelings. We cooked their eggs over an open fire in play, and made pets of the young birds.

Once I counted the number of nests in each tree which ranged from a minimum of six to a maximum of seventeen. We found no eggs this time as it was still too early in spring.

However, instead of returning home I went with Tatiana to see her horse Arabka. After her father's death Arabka was stabled at the fire department stables.

Tatiana knew every fireman by his name and every one of them was her friend. They showed us the new born colts. We climbed their look-out tower.

On our way home we stopped at a Chinese market - a row of open stalls along a dirty alley where one could buy anything, including birds, snakes and lizards. Tatiana knew every one of the tradesmen and spoke to them in Chinese. She bought a beautifully colored bird which, the tradesman swore, was a Bird of Paradise from South China. He said it was worth one rouble and 50 kopecks, but let Tatiana have it for 50 kopecks.

As soon as we reached Tatiana's home we put the bird in a large cage placing a dish of water in it too. The bird immediately began to bathe and clean its feathers. When it had finished bathing, all

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its beautiful colours had vanished, it was just a plain sparrow! Cursing the trader in rhyme, using words I had never heard before, Tatiana gave the bird its freedom.

I returned home by 4 p.m., in time for afternoon tea. No one asked me where I had been nor what I had been doing. I was not sure whether I was allowed to leave the premises like that, all I knew was that with Tatiana I had temporarily forgotten Simbirsk and my loneliness.

I should mention here that the life of the children in our home in Harbin had changed considerably since my first visit. They were <sup>w</sup>growing up.

About two years earlier the old Fraulein announced that the children had outgrown her and that she could manage them no longer. She returned to Germany. Mother tried two new governesses, but neither of them could adjust to our mode of living nor manage the children. Both resigned at the end of one month's service. Mother gave up and fired a German housekeeper, Frau Hock. She occupied the old Fraulein's room; mended clothes, saw that the children bathed regularly and their rooms were thoroughly cleaned, etc. She had no authority over their activities.

Now the children had their meals with the rest of the family occupying the end of the table opposite mother's and were usually separated from her by 12 or 14 guests at each side of the table. I thought that the original arrangement of meals in the nursery was much more satisfactory. There we were in our own domain, here we were among adults who ~~paid~~ <sup>paid</sup> no attention to us. We could not have as many friends to meals as previously - there was no room at the table, nor could we make as much noise as we used to ~~so~~ so as not to interfere with the adults. Our meals were reduced to sitting down,

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eating the food placed before us and leaving, thankful that the meal was over.

Nina and Katie were now on the threshold of youth. They polished their nails and brushed their hair in front of a mirror. Although they had their own friends, they often joined the adult guests. The young officers were beginning to pay them attention.

Natasha was completing her second year at school and had her group of school friends. Tania was ready to enter the first grade of the grammar school. She had no friends of her own, preferring chickens, dogs, cats deer and the other animal residents of our park. Serge did not attend school. He had a private tutor and his own crowd of boys. There was no unity among the various groups of children now as there used to be.

Such were the conditions in our home in Harbin when I was transplanted there.

As mentioned, Aunt Olga and I reached Harbin during the last week of Lent, amidst chaotic preparations for the Easter festival. Everyone was preoccupied with decorating the house, especially the dining room and table. Bouquets of flowers and blooming branches were continuously being delivered. Case after case of wine was carried in from the cellar. From three to five hundred people were expected to visit the house during the Easter holiday.

To the best of my knowledge, in the good old days of ancient Russia, the entire population strictly observed the seven weeks of Lent - no meat, dairy products or eggs were eaten, even fish was avoided. The nation was in mourning. Lent was the time for meditation and the confession of sins. During the last week of Lent the congregations in all the churches mentally relived Christ's last days on earth and suffered with him.

The break of Lent ~~XXXXX~~ followed the Easter midnight service at church. The people of Russia rejoiced in the food and so it became customary to have the table set and ready for the feast before leaving for the midnight service.

As time progressed people became more educated, more intellectual and less religious. Not everyone observed the seven weeks of Lent, but everyone continued to rejoice in the midnight Easter celebration. The last week of Lent remained to be the week of mourning, meditation and confession. So it had been at my Grandmother's home in Simbirsk.

In Harbin life was different - this was the frontier. No one had time for meditation. Only two churches had been built in seven years. The church bells did not ring daily. In our home preparations for the festival were so extensive and intense there was no time for church or meditation. The glory of the Easter holiday was there, but the foundation had been cast away.



So far as I was concerned, I had landed in the midst of turmoil. My wound, caused by Grandmother's death, was hurting. Life would have been unbearable without Tatiana.

Beginning with the first day after my arrival, she always had some new idea, some plan of action, which would carry me away from thoughts of either the present or the past.



I dreaded the forthcoming Midnight Service and Easter Sunday, both of which had meant so much to me, however the day was approaching rapidly.

Two extra tables had been placed in the dining room, one for Nina, Katie and their friends, the second one for us - the children.

By 11 p.m. on that last Saturday of Lent everything was ready for the feast. Silver and crystal sparkled and glittered on snow white linnen tablecloths. The tables were loaded with special Easter food, wine and flowers.

Blossoming branches festooned the walls and ceiling. The intoxicating scent of hyacinths and narcissi filled the house. Bowls of violets were everywhere.

Ten minutes to midnight, dressed in new, white, spring dresses, we left the house for the midnight Easter service. We entered the near by church just as the priest announced:-

"Christ has risen from the dead"

The congregation gaily repeated "Christ has risen from the dead" and began to congratulate each other. There was so much noise and commotion that the voices of the small chorus were entirely drowned out.

Tatiana pulled at my sleeve "Hurry", she whispered "within the next few minutes nearly the whole congregation will be at your house. If we leave right now, run across the field and through General Wat's garden, we will be the first to get back. As there will be many extra waiters from the restaurants to help serve at the tables today who do not know the customs in your house, we can easily ~~have~~ have a couple of bottles of wine from the main table to ours. No one will notice. So we did.

It was a gay banquet as usual.

The last thing I remember is daring Tatiana to throw a small bread pellet into the partly opened mouth of a lady visitor sitting opposite at the main table. Tatiana accepted my challenge and hit the lady on the tip of her nose.

We then simultaneously decided to retire to the nursery before someone threw us out into a ditch outside .

There was always plenty of wine in the house. Toasts were continuously proposed at any gathering around the dining table. However, it was taken for granted that no one would ever show any symptoms of intoxication except a slight increase in gaiety. Should anyone ever accidentally overstep this line, he would simply be shown off the premises and the doors of railway society would be closed to him for ever.

The sun was high when we finally went to bed.

This was the first time since my Grandmother's illness that I had really slept.

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The two weeks Easter vacation was over Tatiana and the rest of the children went back to school.

For the first time since my return to Harbin Mother found time to talk to me. She told me that she had been in contact with the Headmistress of my school in Simbirsk and it had been decided that I would take the end of <sup>term</sup> ~~year~~ examinations with the girls of the third grade of the school in spring and enter the fourth grade in the fall.

In Simbirsk I had been in the third grade, but had missed most of the second half of the year due to grandmother's illness.

Mother suggested that I should use Katy's old books and ask Tatiana where and when the examinations would take place.

I had never studied by myself, always discussing my lessons with Sophia Alexandrovna. Now, looking through the book on Russian history, I let my thoughts go back to Simbirsk - to the small room occupied by Sophia Alexandrovna in our cheerful apartment. I saw myself in front of the library table balancing my chair on its two back legs. I heard Sophia Alexandrovna's soft voice reading to me about Ivan the Terrible. Through the open door I could see Matresha setting the table for the evening meal. I heard Grandmother's voice.

Tatiana's return from school interrupted my thoughts.

"What are you doing?" she demanded. I told her what mother had said.

"For goodness sake be realistic" she replied. "If your mother suggested the fourth grade - you will be in the fourth grade regardless of your previous education or knowledge. Our school is a private institution, the tuition fee is 200 roubles a year. There are five girls in your family. Do you think the headmistress would take the chance of losing 1000 roubles because of you? Oh no, she would much rather accept your mother's suggestion to please her. Besides, your father is an important member of the railway company staff and an honorary judge in the town".

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Oh for heaven's sake" she began, "the school has only just been established in the Russian zone of Manchuria. It has to have the standards of a Russian grammar school. There are no good teachers in this region. Most of the children are spoilt and their parents arrogant.

The school is under the supervision of the Department of Russian Education for the Far East, located at Khabarovsk. Many of our examination papers are sent to Khabarovsk for checking. Sometimes inspectors are sent down to examine the standard. It is a very difficult position for the headmistress. She has to try and please both the parents and the inspectors. The children have to have good grades and a high standing, so a simple method has been devised. Should the daughters of staff members get into difficulties during an examination, the teacher accidentally drops a list of answers on their desks. The children keep quiet because they are pleased, the parents are pleased because their children have received good marks and the inspectors are pleased with the examination papers.

I was shocked, but I had no reason to doubt Tatiana.

In the Simbirsk school we had an honour system and were proud of it. The teachers were our leaders. Suddenly I remembered the incident in the church when my spiritual leader had been more interested in the piece of silver in my hand than in my confession.

I did not say anything to Tatiana, but shut the book and went off with her to the Chinese market and the fire brigade.

A few days later I went to sit my first exam.

The school was located in the so-called "New Town". A special train ran between Old Harbin and the New Town for the school children of the railway employees. This train consisted of five railway carriages with ten compartments in each. Two wooden benches faced each other in every compartment.

The carriage I entered was very crowded, noisy and gay. Children were standing along the corridor, every window was occupied. ~~As I~~

The compartment was crowded. Tatiana had no place to sit. One of the girls was holding her books while another was persuading Tatiana to sit on her lap.

As I reached Tatiana a sudden jerk of the train threw me off balance and I found myself sitting in the center of the bench while the end girl was pushed off on to the floor of the passage. I rose to apologize. Tatiana immediately occupied my place. Another jerk of the train threw me in the opposite direction. The situation was repeated and I found myself in the center of the bench facing Tatiana. Every one was laughing with the exception of the two girls on the floor. They were very indignant. I heard them talking as they made their way along the crowded passage.

"Who is she?" asked one of the girls, "she has no manners at all - pushing people around like that". "Oh, she is the new Sharoff", the other replied. "she thinks that because she is a Sharoff she can do just as she pleases. I believe she was terribly spoilt by her grand other and is just a hoodlum".

Tatiana soft-voiced announced "Beware, she is coming".

I rose and pretending that I held a goblet in my hand proposed a toast "Live and be merry!" Everybody repeated after me "Live and be merry!" laughing. I too laughed, and laughed and laughed until the tears ran down my cheeks. I had lost grandmother, I had lost Limbirsk, and in the past two weeks, the world so carefully built for me by my grandparents had come crushing down around me.

I finally controlled myself and dried my tears, but someone showed me a finger and I started to laugh again. Laughter is contagious - everybody laughed with me.

Thus the adjustment to my new environment began.

made my way along the passage Tatiana called out from one of the compartments.

"Come here Lala, I will introduce you to my friends".



I took the examination<sup>and</sup> as predicted by Tatiana, I found a list of answers to the questions 'conveniently forgotten' on my desk.

My disillusionment with life increased daily. Another week passed ~~by~~ <sup>but</sup> I gained no respect for my new teachers - they were not my leaders; I had no love for my parents - they were strangers. I despised the Bohemian atmosphere ~~which existed~~ among our house guests, the artists, musicians, painters. No one cared whether I existed or not, nor did I. I had nothing to lose. I knew no fear, recognized no authority or law. Freedom and independence became my motto.

I realized I was here to stay until I graduated from the Grammar School and qualified to enter a university in Petrograd, Russia. There I planned to study civil engineering, ~~to~~ learn to build and design bridges and railways which would bring civilization to the further<sup>most</sup> corners of Russia. In the future I intended to fight the forces of nature, to suspend a bridge across Lake Baikal - in the meantime I ~~started~~ <sup>waged</sup> a silent war with Harbin Society, including mother.

It did not take long to learn ~~I quickly learnt~~ to keep out of the house, to spend most of my time either in the park, the stables in the back yard, at the Chinese market or at the fire brigade building.

Tatiana and I were a perfect pair. I appreciated her sense of humour, ~~her~~ sarcasm, ~~her~~ penetrating understanding of Harbin society and her realistic outlook on life. I loved her vitality, gaiety and quick imagination. I admired her ability to tease and make fun of any circumstances.



She liked my independence, ~~my~~ love of danger and ~~my~~ daring.

*taunted*

With Tatiana we ~~taunted~~ every teacher in the school and every adult susceptible to teasing. We ~~raided streets of~~ <sup>ran through the streets</sup> Old Harbin breaking windows and street lights, playing hide-and seek with the police. ~~We began by running away from the police and ended up having to run away from Chinese bandits.~~ <sup>One day we were obliged to use our experience in evading</sup>

*facets*

To digress, Banditry was one of the ~~characteristics~~ <sup>facets</sup> of frontier life in Manchuria at that time. These were well organized ~~gangs~~ <sup>bands</sup> of ruthless, cruel men. Savages who gave no mercy and expected none. They did not value their lives and were insensitive to physical suffering. <sup>of others</sup>

Bandits raided small railway stations, kidnapping the <sup>sent notes</sup> personnel and ~~the~~ forest rangers. They then demanded high ransoms, including with their notes either a finger tip, an ear or other such morsel of their victim, <sup>and</sup> warning that a larger piece would be delivered if the ransom was not paid on time.

The Russian police were unable to cope with these roving bands of desperados ~~who~~ <sup>they</sup> constantly moved from place to place in the mountains, ~~who could easily escape~~ <sup>able to</sup> across the border into China where they ~~were untouchable~~. <sup>could not be ed. because</sup> Chinese law included punishment by physical torture incomprehensible to Russians, therefore these bands preferred to operate in Russian territory. Hardened by their mode of life, knowing the type of punishment they could expect in China, they were not afraid of the Russian police, Russian prisons or Russian punishment.

Returning to my rebellion, that summer Tatiana and I were fascinated by horses and horse racing.



We would harness one of our horses to a light two-wheeled carriage and race every rider along the five mile stretch between the New Town and Old Harbin, frequently returning home with ~~minus a~~ <sup>minus a</sup> ~~the carriage minus wheels~~, one of us leading the horse, the other pushing the carriage.

We also raced every jockey at the race tracks and as we spent so much time there ~~among the gamblers~~ <sup>with them</sup> and gamblers, we too began to bet on the horses. We sold our few jewels - Chinese bracelets, necklaces, watches etc. to gamble. Rumours of our behavior finally reached my mother and we were forbidden to use the horses.

By that time we had acquired a number of friends at the tracks, amongs whom was Mr. Ivanov. ~~He~~ <sup>was</sup> a wine maker operating a Chinese brandy distillery on Chinese territory about two miles beyond the Russian zone. <sup>to evade a law prohibiting</sup> ~~to avoid trouble with Chinese~~ <sup>the manufacture + sale of Chinese</sup> ~~As the sale of alcoholic beverages was prohibited in the~~ <sup>brandy was prohibited in the Russian zone to Chinese in the</sup> Russian zone, Russian railway society boycotted Mr. Ivanov, but Tatiana and I liked him very much.

Meeting us at the race-track without horses, he sympathized and suggested ~~that~~ we could use his, provided we returned them on time and in good condition. We were delighted.

We borrowed his horse the next day and had a wonderful time. <sup>across</sup> ~~However, we were tired. A dusty road crossing a field with bushes~~ <sup>with bushes</sup> ~~passed close to our fence and~~ scattered here and there led to the distillery ~~not far from our fence.~~ <sup>we were both tired and so</sup> The prospect of walking back over two miles ~~after delivering the~~ ~~horse~~ did not appeal to us and we decided to send one of the servants. To our surprise each one we asked replied that he would rather lose his job than go to the distillery because a group of bandits was very active in this particular region.



We were told that the road to ~~the distillery~~ was the route used by Chinese traders bringing their products to Harbin and that many of the merchants had recently been <sup>kidnapped</sup> ~~captured~~.

The responsibility was ours; we had no alternative but to deliver the horse personally.

It was dark when we left the distillery. Straining our ears to catch the faintest sound, watching every bush, we ran back home, our hair standing on end, our hearts pounding. It was only when we saw the familiar guard at our fence that we let ourselves drop to the ground <sup>for a</sup> ~~and~~ rest.

This was the tenor of my life in Harbin. I lived <sup>Emotionally</sup> ~~emotionally~~ <sup>3</sup> on excitement and thrills, looking for adventure and trouble. There was no shortage of either in <sup>on</sup> the frontier life ~~at Harbin~~.





Although 'freedom and independence for all' was the law in our home, my behavior conflicted with my mother's concepts of it. Members of Society were talking about me and rumours had reached my mother's ears.

She was preoccupied with her social activities - the orphanage, charity balls and bazars; she had no time for us, the children. I was a troublesome element in the household. She had to talk to me and scold. She did not like this. I had a sharp tongue, I did not listen, nor did I obey. The conflict grew deeper and deeper. We began to avoid each other.

During this turbulent period, our trips to the wilderness stand out clearly in my memory when, for a short time at least, peace and serenity would descend upon me.

In the heat of summer when life in Harbin seemed intolerable, mother would order our railway carriage connected to a freight train and we would start off towards Okeanskaia.

The carriage would be filled to capacity with Mother's friends and ours. Tatiana was always with us. The children slept on the floor, the berths and couches being reserved for the adults.

Usually we travelled only by night waking to find ourselves at some small railway station in the midst of the mountains. Here we would remain for two or three days exploring neighboring cliffs and woods. Then one night we would hear the car moving and next morning we would be stopped at another small station amid magnificent scenery. Thus we moved from station to station until we finally reached Okeanskaia and the ocean.

Our favourite summer excursions were to newly opened silvicultural stations for the preservation of the virgin forests

in the Russina zone of Manchuria. As soon as such a station was established and the first rough trail cut, we would join the first convoy bringing supplies and ammunition to the forest rangers.

These stations were usually located about 25 - 30 miles from any settlement, i.e. from the railway stations. Horses pulling heavily loaded wagons along trails marked only by wheel tracks moved very slowly. There were many rapid rivers to cross without the aid of either bridges or ferries. It would take about two days to reach our destination.

These trips were full of excitement and thrills, not only because of the majestic beauty of the virgin forests, the brilliantly coloured flowers and birds, but there was also the anticipation of meeting some large wild animal or an encounter with Chinese desperados.

Although the convoy was provided with a few extra wagons for mother, her guests and us, the juniors, we usually walked in the vicinity of the slowly moving wagons, the rangers watching that we did not get lost. We were their guests and their responsibility.

At the end of the day when the sky turned crimson, a small meadow surrounded by great pines and a running brook near by, would be chosen for our overnight camp. The rangers would build fires and roast fresh game for the evening meal. Singing would start; the voices fading away into the mystic darkness of the surrounding woods.

Tents would be put up and beds arranged in them, on the wagons and on the ground under the open sky or under a shady tree.

I liked to sleep on an open wagon. Lying on my back I would watch the twinkling stars and listen to the night whisperings of the forest, which was occasionally interrupted by the hoot of an

owl or the cry of a small bird. I would realize that under the cover of night a tragedy had taken place and a small bird had lost it's life to the owl. I would lie quietly inhaling the forest air scented with wild strawberries and pine, wondering at the beauty and cruelty of Nature.

At the silvicultural camp we were, as previously mentioned, guests of the foresters and rangers. Early in the morning they would take us with them to hunt small game, showed us birds' nests and taught us the names of trees and plants.

At sunset they would take us to a marsh where black and white Japanese cranes danced their evening dance on the velvet of green moss against a backdrop of pink sky.

At those moments it seemed as if I had been transported back to my early childhood when the world was only music and sunshine.

Left to myself, I grew, without guidance, in an atmosphere of beauty, culture and Bohemianism, among the rich and the fortunate, in the midst of Chinese poverty, ignorance and dirt.

At that period of my life, my secret dominating thought was the problem of immortality. It had originated long ago, with the death of my grandfather. Now, under a cover of gaiety and rowdiness I puzzled over the problem of life and death.

When Grandfather died I believed in God, Heaven and the everlasting life that Jesus had promised and the answer was more or less simple. Grandfather was waiting for Grandmother and me in Heaven.

In Harbin we went to church only once a year during the Easter service and then only for five minutes, in order to join our friends for the Easter feast. We did have a Bible class at school, but the priest was drunk most of the time. I now doubted the existence of God and Heaven, but I could not reconcile myself

to the non existence of a spiritual world.

Students who visited our home had the same problem. Natural Selection, Darwinism and the existence of God were continually discussed by them. However, no one ever came to any conclusions. The problem still remained an open one to me.

I believe I was about 15 years old when one of us found a book on spiritualism in my father's library. Tatiana, my sister Natasha with a few of her friends and I began a seance immediately.

It was Frau Hock, who interrupted us. Coming from her room she begged us not to conduct a seance in the house because the consequences could be disastrous. She told us that she herself had been a medium and had conducted many seances which finally brought disaster to her home.

There was a small two-roomed house at the end of our park, hidden by overgrown bushes it humbly stood among the great elms, deserted by everyone, and Frau Hoch said she would be willing to join us in conducting a seance there.

It happened to be a stormy autumn night, the wind had drivon dark clouds over the sky. Flashes of lightning appeared in the distance, the elms moaned shedding their yellow leaves.

The idea of conducting a seance on such a night in the abandoned ~~fourmitten~~ hut, where rats were the only inhabitants, and the only available light could be that of a candle, appealed to us.

When we reached the hut the wind was tearing at the roof and whistling down the chimney.

Fraugh Hock lighted the candle. Her hands were shaking as she placed it on the dusty round table. The wind had disarranged her hair and gray and black strands were hanging down her face. Her eyes shone with an unearthly light. She was small and slightly

hunchbacked. To me at that moment she looked very much like an old witch conducting some magic ritual.

As she placed her hands on the saucer at the center of the ouija board, lightning illuminated the room and thunder shook the hut. The saucer began to move under Frau Hock's fingers. Suddenly it stopped - the arrow pointing to the letter "I".

Frau Hock turned to us an expression of horror on her face, drips of perspiration on her forehead. Her eyes shone like those of an owl at night. "She is here again" she whispered. "It is not her, I know she would not do it to me. It is an evil spirit pretending to be her that has come to haunt me".

"I am not going to conduct this seance. You take it over".

Frau Hock went to the furthest corner of the room.

We placed our hands on the saucer it moved, then stopped pointing to the letter "D", then moved again stopping at the letter "A".

I wondered which one of us was pushing.

Frau Hock had been watching us from a distance.

"What did you get?" she demanded. We told her that apparently the name of our spirit was Ida.

White as a sheet, Frau Hock told us that the name of her daughter was Ida. Then she began:

"Herman and I had a beautiful plantation in Africa. I had two children, Hans and Ida. We were so happy."

"But there is much witchcraft in Africa, the natives are superstitious and they certainly were able to use magic for their own satisfaction".

"There is not very much for a European woman to do on an African plantation".

Witchcraft is contagious, it challenges the mind, and on an African plantation there is plenty of time for speculation.

"So the Womens' Society of the African Plantations organized a Spiritualism Club. It started off as an amusing entertainment. But it is like a sickness, like drinking, it becomes a habit and it can not be stopped. I became the medium. The seances were conducted mostly at our home. I had been warned many times by old friends, but I did not believe that disaster could ever strike our home".

"It came unexpectedly through a revolt of the natives. Hans was 19 and Ida 17 years old at that time".

"We were ready for our evening meal, but all our servants had suddenly vanished. Herman, suspecting something, went to the window. He saw the natives with spears and torches charging toward our house. He grasped Ida and me by our arms and told Hans to follow".

"We escaped by a side door, through the bushes and into dense, low shrubs. There Herman ordered us to lie down and not move. We watched our home burn, our animals destroyed. All that we had built up for so many years, all that we cherished, vanished in a few hours."

"We lay motionless all night, the mosquitoes sucking our blood. Not till noon the next day, when the heat had become intolerable, did Herman tell us to crawl through the shrubs to put as great a distance as possible between us and the rebels. We crawled all day, sharp branches and thorns tearing at our skin".

As Frau Hock spoke, her voice changed to a higher pitch. Red spots appeared on her face and neck. Her eyes became brighter and brighter. She clasped and unclasped her hands.

The wind was raving outside, throwing buckets of rain at the window.

"At dusk", Frau Hock continued, "we finally reached the jungle.

Herman told us that we could rise and walk now. So we walked until complete darkness enveloped us. Then we snuggled together under a big tree and lay there until it was light enough for us to walk on.

"Herman and Hans knew the jungle, they brought us leaves and roots to eat to satisfy our thirst and hunger".

"Then, only a few hours later, Hans was bitten by a poisonous snake. He died within half an hour before our eyes. We did not even bury him".

"Herman said, 'We have no tools and no time. We have to spare our energy to save the rest of us.' "

"So we left Hans - my first born, my beautiful baby, my handsome blond Hans to the vultures who would take care of his flesh."

"We walked on through the jungle, I had lost track of time. Herman got the fever. I knew that he was fighting it, but finally he fell down and would not get up. By dawn of the next day he too was gone. Ida and I left the vultures to take care of him also."

"Now we were left alone. We did not know the jungle nor the direction in which we should go. We just stumbled along. I knew I had the fever, I knew that Ida would have it too. What was the sense in all this? I was very very tired and my head spun. I thought it would be better just to lie down and die, but Ida wanted to go on."

"Finally I dropped down and let myself drift into the past."

"I was again in a bright, cool nursery, Hans, his golden curls shining in the sun was throwing a rubber ball to me". Then I heard Ida calling to me. How could Ida call to me when she was only 8 months old?"

"Then I saw the fire and our home burning and I came too. Ida was not far from me and calling, but my body was on fire and I could not move. She stopped calling, I tried to reach her, but there were

black masks all around me. I tried and tried to reach her".

"I was still trying when I came too in hospital. The rescue patrol had found us. Ida was dead but I was still breathing. They took me to the hospital where for four months the doctors fought to save my life. Why?"

"I have been drifting for the past fifteen years, trying to reach to reach Ida".

Frau Hock stopped for a second. Then she began to mumble to herself.

We decided to go home and hoped that a cool shower of rain would bring Frau Hock hack to her senses.

The next day she was taken to hospital and went out of our lives.

However, the episode did not end there. We were to feel the effects of that night much later.

As far as I was concerned, this was the beginning of my continuous search of the unknown.



Frau Hock was replaced by a young girl of seventeen called Frocia. An orphan, brought up in the Russo-Chinese Orphanage, she liked sewing and wanted to be a dress maker. She was ready to leave the orphanage when mother, whom she greatly admired, suggested that she occupy Frau Hock's position. Frocia was delighted.

She was a very gentle person, a pretty blonde with large blue eyes. She immediately started to treat us as her younger sisters and brother and we accepted her on that basis. Tania was now 11 years old and Serge ten. They both loved Frocia. She and I became very good friends and she always tried to protect my interests.

This was the year that changes began to take place in our home.

Nina had graduated from the grammar school and mother took her to Petrograd where Nina intended to enter the Agricultural Institute for advance study.

They went via Europe and southern Russia. Mother was away from home for about six months and father delegated Katy to replace her at the formal dinners.

There was a definite change in the trend of our life at home. The younger generation began to take over.

Out of the old crowd, some married and settled down, some left for Russia and others tired of the mode of life. The younger crowd replaced the old.

~~They were the ones who filled the house now - the drawing room, the library, the winter garden, the park. We were~~  
~~in the majority. Unpredictable, noisy and independent we crowded~~  
~~the older generation out. We had keen eyes and sharp tongues.~~

We were sarcastic and very critical. We knew so much, the rest of the world was ignorant and stupid!

My uncle, 60 years old at the time, was the first to move out and settle in New Harbin.

His pheasant died from old age.

Aunt Olga's canaries - 100 of them, died from an epidemic in one week, and she decided to follow my uncle's example, also moving to New Harbin.

On August 1, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia. Under the influence of the compelling power of the word "War", the mood of Harbin's society rose to fever pitch. Nearly everyone was ready to join. They were tired of the atmosphere they themselves had created in Manchuria. Tired of "wine and women", the lavish spending of money and the continuous, meaningless gaiety. Every one wanted a goal in life, a golden halo around his head. War and Russia were the answer leading to new adventures and new excitement.

Harbin out did itself giving farewell parties for the new heroes. There were daily banquets and parties in honour of the departing volunteers. Never before had so much champagne been spilled over the town.

Our home and our life was the center of this new hurricane which lasted for a couple of years, and this time, we the youngsters were a part of it.

Then people began to realize that many of those who had left would never return. Those who returned, came back as amputees. They were not the same happy individuals.

Although by 1916 bread and sugar queues were forming in Russia and there was a shortage of fuel; Harbin continued to prosper.

We first felt the effects of the war in 1915 when our coachman Dimitry was drafted. He was difficult to replace as he and aunt Olga had been in charge of the horses for years. With aunt Olga living in New Harbin and Dimitry at war, the horses did not get proper care. They were all thoroughbreds and the severe Manchurian climate had never agreed with them, and they were no longer young. Without proper care they were continuously in need of veterinary care.

Frequently, when father needed the horses, they were ill and a team would have to be borrowed from General Wat or from the Fire Department. This situation annoyed father considerably.

One afternoon in January 1916, while we were having our afternoon tea, Father unexpectedly announced that in a couple of months we would be moving to New Harbin.

Without giving us a chance to recover, he turned to mother and said:-

"I sold our horses this morning, keeping the black pair for the house and Old Gray Vaska for you".

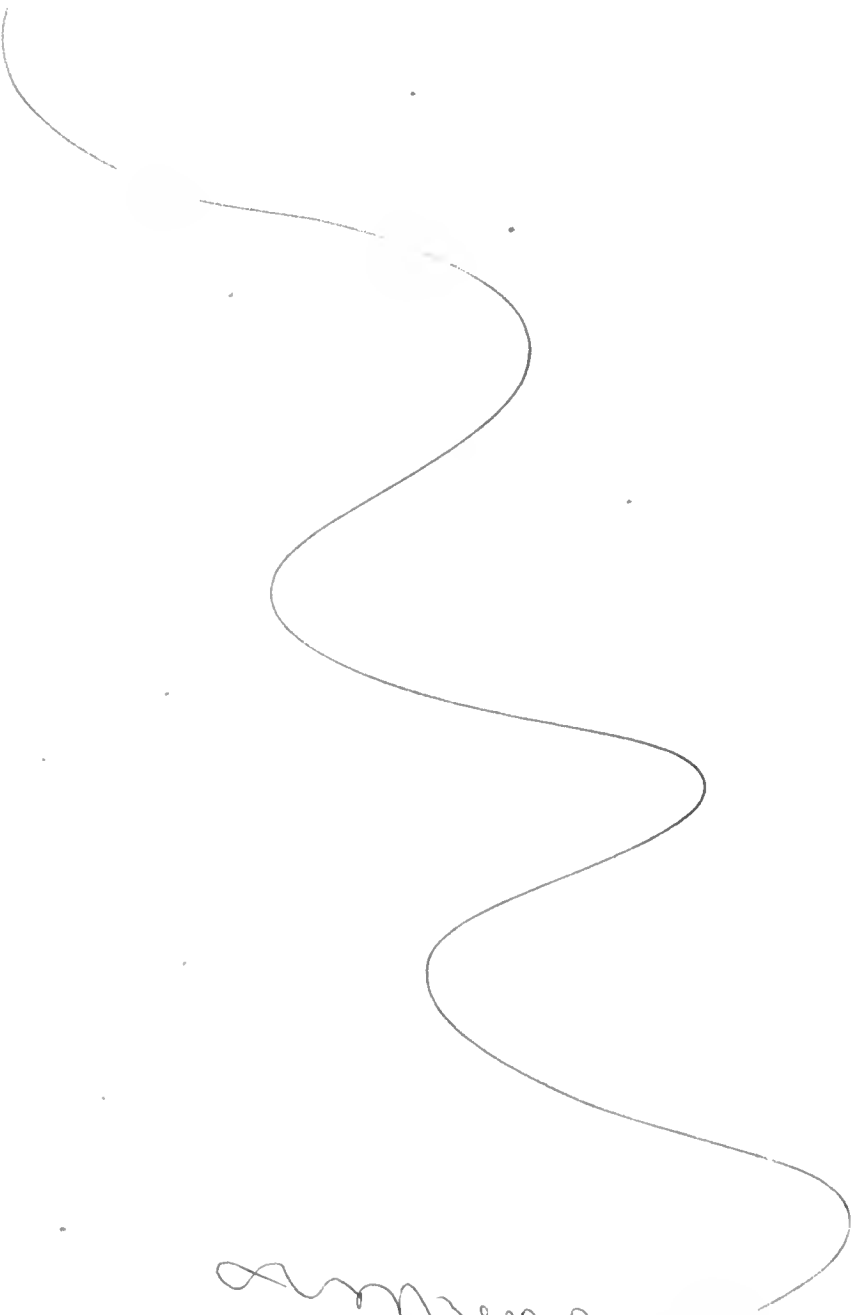
He stopped, lighted his cigar and continued:-

"We are moving into the house of Mr. Danielle - head of the engineering department who has just been appointed to a new post to construct a railway in Northern Russia".

"It is a beautiful house secluded in a Japanese style garden".

"It is only two blocks from the Railway Administration building".

"Actually nobody wants this place any more. The girls have grown up. Nina is apparently going to the war as a red cross nurse. Katy is to be married this summer. Lalia will probably



*W. J. ...*

Fran Hock was replaced by a young girl of seventeen  
called Frocia, <sup>born 4</sup> who was an orphan and had grown up in the Russian  
Chinese Orphanage. She admired our mother very much and was  
delighted when mother suggested she should come to us

go to university next year. No one uses either the park or the house. They all spend their time in New Harbin, attending the theatre or evening parties, returning home at three or four o'clock in the morning, usually on foot along the empty five mile stretch of road between Old and New Harbin".

It was Tania who interrupted him. Banging her cup of tea on the table she declared that she would not move anywhere - not this summer at any rate.

"I am going to live in the old hut at the end of the park" she said. "Nobody wants it, nobody knows that it is there, probably".

She was supported by Mother who suddenly said:-  
"Tania I shall stay with you". Then turning to father she asked:

"Could we keep the hut, part of the park and the back yard as a summer residence? I have eight young cows and more than a hundred poultry. They are my hobby and I would like to keep them".

Father replied "This could be arranged, but you will have to be responsible for the upkeep of the place".

On March 25th, 1916 we moved to the New Town, retaining the hut which humbly stood among the elms at the end of the park, as our summer residence.

This was the beginning of the end of our family. Disintegration set in rapidly and with it went our family paradise.

At that time, however, we did not realize this, and for another couple of years carelessly continued our secure and protected existence.

The trend which began in Old Harbin continued, there were fewer formal dinners and fewer strangers lived in our house. Most of the crowd were the younger people - our friends. We were

not so Bohemian, nor were we as artistic and talented as the generation we had replaced. We lacked their culture, education and experience.

As one grows older time appears to pass faster and faster, shorter and shorter become the intervals between one Christmas and another. The years pass by more swiftly, and so another year slipped through my fingers.

Katy was married in June 1916 and left for Tientsin, China where her husband had been appointed vice-consul.

My last year before graduating from the grammar school was of the same order as the previous years. I continued to shock and fight society.

New Harbin was situated along the bank of a river and during the summer we spent much of our time exploring the waterway.

Our ~~evening~~<sup>crowd</sup> was a gay one, but I was becoming tired of fighting and laughing. I was physically exhausted from the continuous adventures, excitement and lack of sleep. I never had time to sleep. I read through the nights. This was the year Russian Theatrical Companies were touring the United States. All of them stopped in Harbin. This was our opportunity to see the best Russian performances of drama, opera and ballet. Tatiana and I never missed the chance. In addition to all our other activities we went to the theater nightly.

This was my final year at the Grammar School. I was planning to go on to university and was looking forward to university life. I craved to learn. I intended to study the forces of Nature. I also cherished the dream of suspending a bridge across Lake Baical. Accepting the world as a mechanical device I felt no conflict in studying the laws and forces of

"Nature" and pursuing my engineering career.

I did not expect any guidance or leadership from the university nor did I want them. I intended to depend only on myself. However, I hoped that the university would be an open field of knowledge and that there would be others there who had the same interests as I did. I was ready to begin a new life.





On March 15th, 1917 Emperor Nicholas II abdicated. The Provisional Government which took over consisted of liberal noblemen and middle class leaders, mostly democrats and constitutionalists.

In March 1917 Russia became a republic.

Demonstrations were staged in Harbin for the first time. Grammar school students marched with red flags and posters which read "Down with Nicholas, down with imperialism."

I wondered "Why?"

In Russia there had been a lack of food and fuel from the beginning of the war. Men were continuously being killed at the front. All this finally put the masses on edge. Riots and strikes provoked by communist propoganda, affected the country.

There was nothing of this sort in Harbin. Every body continued their more or less prosperous existence.

The grammar school students in Harbin had never been interested in politics. We were too far away from Russia. Manchuria was our empire.

I had lost the feeling that the Emperor was our father on earth, long ago. But I did remember the full size portrait of Nicholas II in it's golden frame hanging on the wall of grandfather's library. I knew that grandfather would have protected his Emperor with his life to the end.

It seemed to me that the final tenuous threads, the last contact with my beautiful childhood, were being torn out of my heart.

I graduated on May 15th, 1917.

There was a continual struggle for power in Petrograd between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet"

(Worker's council) supported by the bolsheviks.

There was also confusion at the front. Many of the officers refused to serve the republic. Peasant soldiers, finding themselves leaderless began deserting. The transportation system suffered from mismanagement and disarrangement of schedules causing ever increasing shortages of food and fuel. The starved, cold people revolted. Riots and strikes spread throughout the country like wild fire.

Such were the conditions in Russia at the time of my graduation.

Congratulating me on my graduation, mother asked me what my plans were for the future.

"I hope", she began, "you realize that you can not go to Petrograd under the present circumstances, nor can I take you to Europe. However there is an Institute of Oriental Languages at Vladivostok. An Institute of Technology and a University, including a medical school, are located in Tomsk, in the center of Siberia. I do not think that the present troubles will spread as far as Siberia, so you may enroll in any of these institutions if you wish."

"In the meantime I can get you a railway ticket to China. You may spend the summer with Katy if you would like to do so".

In the Fall of 1916 I contacted the Politechnic Institute in Petrograd and the Institute of Technology in Tomsk. I decided on the latter as Siberian forests attracted me more than the social life of Petrograd. I felt more at home in the woods than in an opera box or a ball room. Having grown up in our back yard, the fire station and the race tracks, or tramping through the wilderness of Manchuria, I had not acquired the manners and graces

suitable to a social life. Being aware of this I felt awkward at society gatherings, nor did I enjoy them.

I was ready to work on my mental development and preferred the solitude of the woods to social activity.

I was looking forward to my new life in Tomsk and the summer to be spent with Katy in China. The future shone brightly before me.

The only thing that troubled me slightly was my little Keeky - a black and white Japanese dog.

She had come to me when I needed her, during my first year in Harbin shortly after my permanent return there.

I saw her sitting up on her back legs at the corner of the railway platform when we were boarding the train on our way back from school. I picked her up, she licked my nose and laid her head on my shoulder.

Father said it was a valuable dog and should be advertised in the papers. However, if no one claimed her within two weeks, I could keep her.

So Keeky became my little friend and companion. She slept with me.

That first year in Harbin, when I was so very lonely and homesick for Simbirsk, I found comfort at night by placing my head against her soft fur. I would go off to sleep listening to her heart beat at my cheek.

Now I felt a little guilty leaving Keeky behind. My sister Tania had promised to take care of her. She always did so when I was not at home.

Tania was my pal. Besides, she had loved Keeky from the moment I had brought her home. I knew I could trust her, yet the

feeling of guilt remained.

It was the twenty second of May 1917, just one week after graduation. I was to leave for Tientsin the next afternoon and had been staying with Tatiana overnight.

Frocia, Tania and Keeky, had already moved to our summer residence - the abandoned hut among the elm trees, which we had used for our spiritual seances.

After Frau Hock ~~left~~, we had conducted many seances in that hut but although we always chose a stormy night in order to create the right atmosphere, we were never successful in contacting any spirits.

Now the house was cleaned and painted. Tania and Frocia had made a warm and cheerful home of it.

It was a bright morning, the fresh leaves of the elms whispered above the house. Frocia was in the kitchen preparing breakfast while Tania was combing her hair in front of a mirror. Suddenly she saw the reflection of a big dog running across the yard. She thought there was something queer about the way it ran without looking around, holding it's head down without sniffing the ground. There was foam at it's mouth and the eyes seemed glazed.

Tania thought that it might be poisoned and loving animals went out to see if she could coax it to her. As soon as she opened the gate Keeky rushed out, her fur standing on end, and placed herself between Tania and the dog.

Keeky! Who had never fought a dog before.

The next moment the dog had pinned Keeky to the ground and tore at her throat. Tania grabbed the dog's neck, who then let Keeky go but hung on to Tania's arm. She shook it

off but it grabbed her leg. Tania called ~~her~~ for help.

There was a Chinese working in the yard. He threw down his tools and ran in the opposite direction shouting:- "Guard, Guard, Miss Tania and the little Keeky both are gone, gone for ever. The bad dog, the mad dog, has got them both. It would be better if both of them were dead".

Frocia ran out of the kitchen. The guard with an automatic in his hand appeared from the other side. They reached Tania just as the dog suddenly let go of her leg and dropped down in convulsions at her feet.

The guard shot the dog through the head. He told Tania to see the doctor immediately as the dog probably had rabies.

Tania called me up before seeing the doctor.

I took Keeky to the veterinarian. Her wind pipe was damaged and he put her to sleep in my arms.

He had already had a report on the dog. It had hydrophobia.

The Railway Company doctor fortunately lived in one of the four apartments our old house had been converted into, and as it was early in the morning Tania found him at home. He called mother immediately and told her that Tania must have a series of injections against hydrophobia and that the first injection should be given within thirty six hours, the sooner the better.

As the only place these injections were available was in a hospital in Vladivostok, a special non-stop train, consisting of our railway carriage and an engine took Mother and Tania there that morning.

Tania was crying as she said goodbye to me.

"Liala", she told me, " I did not neglect Kecky. I do not know where she had come from. I tried to save her but could not".

I knew that and told her so.

I left for Tientsin China the same day. There was nothing to hold me in Harbin now.

However, this was the first shadow which had already cast itself across my future which had appeared to shine so brightly before me.

Tientsin was a treaty port ~~consisting~~ <sup>containing</sup> of a number of European concessions. Each bore the characteristics of its country with the exception of the Russian one, which, it appeared, consisted of a two storey building set in the middle of a large garden. The top floor was the residence of the consul general. Katy's apartment occupied two thirds of the ground floor, and the rest of the building was the consular offices. A small house behind the garden was the residence of Mr. Korski, secretary to the consulate.

I had never been so far south and was fascinated by the different plants and especially by the cicadas which develop underground for thirty years and then emerge from their outer skins to live and fly for just one day.

I could spend hours under the trellised grape arbors admiring the rich foliage and picking at the fruit.

The atmosphere of the house was that of a well regulated English one, entirely opposite to our anarchistic life at home. However, I was a guest and treated with great courtesy, so I tried to live according to the rules.

Because of the heat, an afternoon siesta was strictly observed by every body, even in the Chinese city itself. From noon to four o'clock the whole population of Tientsin, myself included, rested.

There were no social activities in Tientsin during the summer months. Most of the families migrated to their summer residences on the sea shore. Only men on duty remained in town.

Adjacent to the consular garden were tennis courts conveniently connected by a small gate. These courts were open to all the members of the various consulates.

Tennis was a game I had always enjoyed and to play it

with Englishmen and Americans was a new challenge and thrill.

Katy was in the eighth month of her first pregnancy and stayed at home. Her husband stayed with her.

Mrs. Korski had a month old baby daughter and played with her as if it were a doll.

Mr. Korski was my constant escort. I believe that as no one else was available, he considered it a part of his duties. He and I practiced tennis every morning from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m., and in the evenings from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. we played with the Englishmen and the Americans.

It was at the tennis court that I met Mr. Altman, the Russian consul general, before I was formally introduced to him. He was an older man. His family was at the beach and he was very lonely.

I found him a very intelligent and educated man and enjoyed his company. He was amused by my spontaneity, a rare quality among consular members. He often joined us at our early morning practices.

My second recreation was riding. A small contingent of cossaks was stationed at the consulate. They provided the horses and Mr. Korski and I explored the countryside and river on horseback.

On the whole life in Tientsin was extremely regular without much excitement. I would probably have found it extremely dull over a long period, but for the three short months that I stayed there, it was relaxing and amusing.

Returning to Harbin I was surprised at the change of relationship between Tatiana and myself.

All the years after my permanent return to Harbin Tatiana and I had been inseparable. We were at the same grade in school,



had sat the the same desk. There was not a day that we did not spend together. Yet now, after three short months of separation we had nothing to say to each other. There was no contact between us.

Tatiana was now working in the office of the railway company. I finally managed to ask her about her work, to which she replied that she did not want to talk or even think about it in her free time.

She said: "I hate the work and the people I work with. I hate the building and the hours I spend in it".

Then she said that she was invited to a party that night and asked whether I would like to come with her.

I could not go as Frosia was busy getting my wardrobe ready and needed me for fittings. There was not much time as I intended to leave for Tomsk within two weeks.

I saw Tatiana only once before I left. Strange as it may seem, we had suddenly lost everything we had in common. We were now strangers. It puzzled me and I tried to reach Tatiana, but I failed. Tatiana was out of my life.



Tomsk was situated in the depths of the Siberian woods where my ancestors had lived and hunted centuries before the city was ever thought of. The same woods which had left their mystic imprint upon me in my early childhood.

A single track line, about 30 miles long connected Tomsk with the Great Trans-Siberian Railway.

Early in the morning on September 7th 1917, a small local train carried me across thirty miles of pine forest to the birch grove where the Tomsk railway station was located.

Although the rainy season had already begun, I arrived on one of those exceptional autumn days when the sky is clear and blue, the pine forest washed by the rain is fresh and green and the bushy tailed squirrels are especially busy collecting nuts for the winter.

The year, as the day of my arrival, was bright and clear for me. In Tomsk I found all that I had been dreaming of.

The Institute of Technology and the University did not open for registration until September 15th, but I had come early intending to explore the forest, hoping to capture the spirit of my ancestors.

That first morning I was lucky enough to rent a room from Professor Petrov in one of the Institute buildings designed as residences for the professors.

My friendly relations with professor Petrov and his family were quickly established; the day after my arrival I bought them a sack full of mushrooms. I had carried them on my back from the woods, scented with pine and moss having used my petticoat for a bag. My hair was full of pine needles, my

shoes muddy.

The professor and his wife were very amused and teased me about it all through the year.

On September 14th the town came to life. The street was crowded with young people and the smiling, shining faces of youth appeared everywhere. Students from all parts of Russia were gathering for the registration. They arrived eager to learn, eager to begin a new life away from home.

Going to meet my room mate at the station I was delighted to see the familiar faces of students from Manchuria.

By September 20th, registration was completed, and I started a new life.

Through physics, cosmology, geology and mathematics I searched for the secrets of "Nature".

I was not alone in this search for the unknown. Wherever a small group of students gathered, there would be discussions of Darwinism and the mechanical universe or of religions and of God as an intelligent force. Philosophy was in the thoughts of every student. Schopenhauer and his "Nirvana" were especially popular and so was the mania for suicide as an escape from life to Nirvana.

We, the students from Manchuria, also formed a small group to study and discuss philosophy. Through it we searched for a comprehension of the universe and God unknown, for the origin and essence of life. We studied Schopenhauer simultaneously with Plato, Kant and oriental asceticism.

We accepted from Schopenhauer, that ~~the~~ true philosophy is art and its comprehension belongs only to a few; that philosophy can not be thought out, but should be a revelation. This assumption flattered our egos. We kept these studies and discussions outside

the university walls and jealously guarded them from any intrusion by the professors. However we dug deeply into the history of philosophy and it gave me great pleasure to know that as long ago as 800 B.C., the poet Zoraster had searched for an intelligent God.

Those gatherings are vivid in my memory. A group of us sitting around a table with a boiling samovar on it.

There was not much food. Bread and sugar had been rationed. Candy and preserves unobtainable, meat scarce. None of this disturbed us. "Man does not live by bread alone", particularly if he is well fed. We, the students from Manchuria had been well fed for years and a little dieting did us no harm.

It was an old Russian student custom that the landlord should provide a boiling samovar three times a day. We chose to have our's at 4, 8 and 11 p.m.

The group would assemble at about 8 p.m., the samovar already in place, warmed the room and gently sang it's little song as if inviting the people to draw in closer. At 11 p.m. it would be refilled with water and red hot coals.

Absorbed in reading and discussing philosophical problems we would fail to notice that the red coals had become cold and black and no water remained. It would be three or four o'clock in the morning when the early chill penetrated the room, would we break off.

The internal politics of Russia were another vital subject to the students, but although the majority of students were involved, discussions in this matter were not as liberal or free since there was always the possibility of police intervention and arrest.

Nevertheless there were large organizations of anarchists, monarchists, socialists, menshevicks, bolshevicks and communists.

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These parties usually met secretly by night in some basement, attic or forgotten barn lit by a single candle.

I had never been interested in politics, however with the rest of our group I visited all of them and was not very favorably impressed. It seemed to be the aim of each party to foster a riot or a strike in the country, while I felt that Russia had already had more than it's share of disturbances. Another thing I objected to were the numbers of green, inexperienced and ignorant individuals who were prepared to rule Russia. It appeared to me that most of the students were attracted to these meeting by the mystic light of the candle, the excitement of possible police interference and arrest. They were playing the same game I had played as a minor in Harbin, thwarting the police. Only these students were older and "playing with fire", bringing damage to a country already partially destroyed.

Soon after registering I learned that the registration book entitled me to sit examinations whenever they were held, usually during the last month before the closing of the school year. Although lectures were given regularly, students were expected - but not required - to attend them. A professors standing was judged by his creative work and by student attendance at his lectures. No assignments were given and no text books suggested. By the time students were ready sit their examinations, a detailed knowledge of the subject was expected of them.

I never missed my classes in physics, cosmology or geology. However I attended the courses in mathematics only once in two or three weeks, just to know what was going on. There was a wealth of written material on projective and analytical geometry which I studied at the library.

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Although I was not registered in this course, I regularly attended lectures in abnormal criminal psychology for law students at the university. This was an advance course given for a small group of students by Dr. Tokareff of the insane asylum. Every other Saturday he met us there and took us on his rounds to question patients.

The asylum was about ten miles away from the university set in a pine wood. We usually skied there and I enjoyed these trips as much as I enjoyed the lectures.

On November 7th 1917 the Bolshevicks seized Petrograd and took over the Provincial Government.

On November 8th, the new government declared the abolition of private ownership and the nationalisation of land. Homes in the cities became municipal property.

Within a few days the first struggle between the Bolshevik and White forces began in Moscow.

The atmosphere in Tomsk became alarming. No body knew what to expect. There were rumours that the Institute and the University would be closed. Students were receiving telegrams urging them to return home.

Most of the students from Manchuria depended on monthly allowances and there was a possibility that contact with Manchuria would be interrupted. The prospect of remaining in Tomsk without an allowance for an indefinite period did not appeal to anyone.

A homeward bound group of Manchurian students was organized for the early Christmas vacations. They left on November 12th, but I decided to remain in Tomsk. I had some work at the library and drawings to complete. I also hoped to catch up on some badly needed

sleep.

On November 20th self-demobilization took place at the front. Soldiers rushed home to get their share of land the new government had promised.

Resistance groups to the new regime were being organized every where.

I completed my work by the first of December.

Most of the out of town students had followed the example of the Manchurian group and left early.

The Institute's restaurant was empty, the library deserted. The tempo of life in the town slowed down. The temperature dropped to 45<sup>o</sup> C below zero.

I suddenly felt lonely and hungry. Hungry for the food we regularly had at home, the roasts of beef and pork, roast pheasant broiled lamb, etc. My mouth watered at the thought of the small, round meat pies deep fried in butter which we usually had for breakfast on Sundays; the French pastries and fruit pies served with afternoon tea. I had not even smelled roast beef or roast pork since I left home.

I began to think about our group and what they were doing in Harbin.

My return pass to Harbin was in my desk and could be used at any time. On December 3rd I decided to go home for the Christmas holidays. On December 4th the same local train that had brought me to Tomsk a few months earlier, took me back to the junction of the Great Trans-Siberian railway.

The station was packed with soldiers. A few civilians sitting on the floor near a wall looked exhausted and depressed.

I spoke to one of the women. She said that she and her daughter were from Moscow. Their home had been seized and they were on their way to Irkutsk. Across Russia they had been obliged to travel on the platform connecting two railroad cars. They had to change trains at this station and had hoped that things would improve. However, they had been here for two days unable to board because the trains were filled with soldiers.

I found a porter, showed him my pass and asked him to get me a first class compartment on the next train to Manchuria.

He looked at me sarcastically and said :- "Miss, there isn't a chance even to come near a first class compartment. Were I to try and place you in the passageway of a third class carriage I would have to fight the "entire army". Just see how many soldiers there are here, and there are just as many arriving on each incoming train".

I objected, "Soldiers do not travel first class".

"That used to be so" he replied "but not any more. Not for the past week in any case. Although the soldiers have no passes they have rifles. They are returning home to get the land they were promised and want to get there first. Nothing can stop them. I say, go back to Tomsk where at least you have a roof over your head".

I gave him five roubles - a gold piece- to buy his children Christmas presents, then asked him to put me on the train somehow.

He looked at me, shook his head and said:- " You are just like the soldiers. You want to go home and nothing will stop you. Well, it's your funeral. I will do my best to squeeze you in. The train should be here in about 20 - 25 minutes. Come to the

end of the platform - the last cars are our best chance".

We were the first, standing on the very edge of the railway platform at the farthest corner from the station. It was bitterly cold I covered my nose and ears with my fur collar to prevent them from freezing. Just as I thought that the train would never come the porter said "Here it comes, can you hear it?"

The next moment the train appeared rounding a curve and the soldiers rushed out from the station filling the platform.

As the train slowed down, my porter grasped the hand rail with his left hand and running with the train jumped onto the steps. He was immediately pushed in by the soldiers who were also leaping on board the moving train. I was pushed out, then squeezed and finally pushed in by the mass.

As I entered the passageway I thought there was not even standing room and that I would never find my porter, but there he was calling to me from the first compartment nearest the entrance.

"In here Miss, you are lucky. We made it".

He was sitting smiling on an upper berth.

"You are lucky" he repeated. "The upper berth is safer for you and the compartment is next to the ladies rest room so that you will not have to fight your way in.

I was to learn the wisdom of his judgement later.

I gave him another rouble and climbed to my place.

Never before had I travelled third class. There was no door separating the compartment from the passageway and a thin partition at the back of the berths served to divide one section from the next. The berths were just plain, hard wood. I took off my shoes, rolled out my blanket, lay on top of it and covered myself with my

coat. I was frozen to the bone standing on the platform.

Four soldiers occupied the two lower berths of the compartment. There was a soldier on the upper one opposite mine. Another one just behind the thin partition. I could hear him breathing. I could see soldiers sitting in the passageway with their backs against the wall. I could see no civilians. As I learned later I was the only one on the whole train.

The train remained at the station for another half hour and then began to move.

The soldier opposite me crossed himself said "Blessed be God, we are off!" and closed his eyes.

I thought "Thank God the car is warm" and also closed my eyes.

Although it was still early in the day, I was exhausted from the morning experience and the bitter cold. As the train started to move faster, I dropped off to sleep.



When I awoke the train was approaching a large station. The conductor had announced a thirty minute stop, and this information was passed on from person to person finally reaching our compartment. The passageway was once again crowded with soldiers preparing to get out.

The man on the berth opposite me stretched, yawned and said "Time to eat". He jumped down and joined the crowd.

I too felt hungry. It was 2 p.m. by my wristwatch.

I left the train last. As I was travelling alone and preferred to eat at the station restaurants I had neither a food canteen nor teapot with me. I saw that the station building was very far from the car in which I was travelling and that it was full of soldiers. I decided to go to the peasant market instead. To my dismay I saw that it too was crowded with soldiers. Like a thick gray wall they separated me from the food stalls.

The station bell struck twice meaning that the train would leave in ten minutes. I turned back to avoid the last minute rush, climbed back on to my berth and took stock of my plight. Apparently I would have to face the same situation at every station where food could be obtained. With luck I would be able to eat at Irkutsk where I had to change trains but that was at least twenty-four hours later. Furthermore Irkutsk was a large junction, would I be able to get on board another train and how soon? I decided it was too late to worry about these things now and the best I could do was to go back to sleep.

Before I had a chance to close my eyes the soldier from the opposite berth returned. He looked at me then asked "Did you have anything to eat?".

I explained that I had been unable to reach the food stalls because of the crowd.

"Where are you going?" was his next question.

"Home, to Harbin Manchuria", I replied.

"That is a long way off" he commented. "How do you expect to get food if you cannot even get close to the stalls?"

I told him that I expected to get some food in Irkutsk.

"Irkutsk?" He looked at me with amazement. "Don't you know that we will not reach there for another two days. What will you do after Irkutsk? It will take another five days to reach the Manchurian border."

"Well," I said, "the best I can do now is to sleep until we reach Irkutsk. Good night!"

"Wait", he called. I looked at him. He was smiling.

"It is not as bad as it looks" he continued. "I expected that you would be unable to get any food. You are no match for the soldiers, so I bought a couple of extra small pies stuffed with sour kraut and mushrooms. They are good and only 10 kopeks each. I also bought you a bottle of milk".

I thanked him and paid for the food. I considered giving him a tip for bringing it to me, then decided against it. This was a kind gesture from one fellow passenger to another. It seemed to me best to leave it that way.

He had a nice, round typically Russian face with a broad stubbed nose and gray eyes. His brown hair and beard were streaked with gray.

The bell struck three announcing that the train was leaving. In a second the car became crowded. As the train moved my new friend jumped back into his place.



We talked as we ate.

He began the conversation by asking "Do your folk have land in Manchuria?"

I shook my head "No". Then I asked him if he was returning home to get more land.

He also shook his head. "No" he said. "I have a nice plot about 30 miles north of Chita. I am going home to see that no one gets it while I am fighting the war. Fighting for only God knows what. When the war began we were fighting for "Mother Russia", for the Tzar, our "Father". But now they have done away with the Tzar. Now the Jews - Kerenski then Trótsky - are ruling Russia. Everything belongs to the workmen. Brother is against brother, Russian against Russian. No body knows what will happen. I am going home to protect my land and my family".

He stopped for a second looking at me sadly, then said:- "What is a nice kid like you doing on this train? You know you have no business being here. I have a daughter about your age. I would hate to see her in your shoes right now".

"Why?" I asked. "I am going home. What is wrong with that?"

"Nothing wrong with your going home", he replied. "But you not afraid of the soldiers?"

It was my turn to be amazed. "Frightened of the soldiers? Why? Soldiers are my brothers. They fought to protect Russia, women and children. Why would they hurt me?"

He just shook his head, then began to explain: "These soldiers have been fighting for the last four years. They have been taught and ordered to kill and destroy. They are tough and have been baptised by fire and ice. They have seen a lot of blood spilt and are deserters now because they left their commanders. They have

rifles and recognize neither law nor order. They are on edge, ready to explode. They are hungry for food, women and a good time. Do not mix with the soldiers. Stay put on your berth. You may get by. I will look after you and bring you food. . I would hate to see my daughter in your place".

During our conversation I learned that he was a sergeant and his name was Michael Popoff. I thought of our Michael in Simbirsk and felt secure.

The soldiers on the lower berths started a card game. Michael jumped down and joined them. I stared through the window at the snow covered woods. I always felt at home on board a train, even here on the hard wooden berth of a third class compartment.

It was only next evening that I fully realized the significance of Michael's words.

At about 7 p.m. the train pulled in to a brightly lit station supposedly for a ten minute stop. As we slowly neared the station I could see a long goods train filled with soldiers on the next track. Judging by their actions, gestures and <sup>the</sup> expression on their faces the soldiers were very excited.

The train stopped and I turned my attention to the station building. Through the window I saw the station Master standing at the center of the platform holding the passing rod. There was a group of soldiers facing him, apparently from the goods train as our soldiers were only just beginning to dismount. As they approached the group on the platform one of the latter grabbed the passing rod and raced towards the goods train engine, the rest of the men of that group ran toward their train. Some of the soldiers from our train followed the man with the rod. Others stopped to speak to the station master. The conversation lasted only a few seconds. The goods train gave a

whistle and started to move. At that moment one of the soldiers ~~it~~ raised his fist and struck the station master full in the face. In a moment the whole crowd attacked him. He fell and I saw by the movement of their legs that the soldiers were kicking him. I also saw them hitting him with their rifle butts. They were killing him!

I jumped from my berth and started towards the door. Michael was just entering the compartment and pushed me back. "Where do you think you are going?" he demanded. "Get back on that berth and stay there!"

"They are killing him! They are killing him!" I screamed.

"I tell you get back to that berth" Michael repeated. "Do you want to be killed or raped? Go back to that berth".

Subconsciously I saw the goods train moving backward, then stop. Our train gave a whistle then jerked.

Michael grabbed me by the waist and pushed me up into my place. "Stay there you bloody fool" he barked at me. Then added more calmly :- "You did not see anything, nor did you hear anything. Do not dare to say anything about this to the soldiers. Go to sleep".

The soldiers filled the train which increased speed. I pulled my coat over my head and peered from under it at the station in horror. I saw the body of the station master lying on the platform, arms outspread. His head was bent at an unusual angle. One of his legs was twisted under him. His face a mass of blood.

I saw the soldiers from the goods train crossing the platform, breaking the station windows and men and women running out of the building, the soldiers chasing them.

As the distance between the train and station increased

the scene of the disaster faded away to be replaced by a bright glow in the darkness. The soldiers were burning the station.

Next evening I read a report of the incident in an Irkutsk newspaper. It said:

" A goods and a passenger train arrived almost simultaneously at the Semenovka station. Both trains were occupied by soldiers each demanding priority. A soldier from the goods train grabbed the passing rod from the station master and started his train.

A group of soldiers from the passenger train accused the station master of unfair treatment and beat him to death. At the same time another group of soldiers from the passenger train boarded the goods train forcing the engineer to move it back, got hold of the passing rod and passed it on to their own engine.

The passenger train left first and the goods-train was obliged to wait. While waiting the soldiers destroyed the station, killed two men and raped three women".

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Let us return to the time of the incident.

That night the soldiers in my car were very quiet. There was no singing or card game. There was no conversation and the light was put out early. Everyone avoided each other.

This was the first time I had faced violence. The war that had seemed to be so far away, suddenly was very close. I began to realize what a war does to people and a country.

I wondered "Is it better to kill or to be killed?".

I did not sleep that night tossing from side to side on my hard wooden berth.

Next day before we reached Irkutsk I asked Michael:

"Are you going to take the train from Irkutsk to Chita?"

"Yes" he answered, looking at me inquisitively.

"Would you mind very much getting me a berth on the train while you are getting your's?" I pleaded.

"Not at all" he replied "I might just as well get two berths as one".

I was lucky.

We arrived in Irkutsk about 5 p.m. and Michael put my luggage in the waiting room where there were a few civilians, then he left to find out about a train for Chita promising to bring me food.

Once again the station was filled with soldiers.

Next to the waiting room was the restaurant where grandmother and I usually had a meal while waiting for a train. It had been a first class dining room. Four real palms decorated the long table in the centre. The linen was always snow white, the china fine and the cutlery real silver. ~~THE~~ Food was served from shining copper dishes. The waiters and service were irreproachable. Brightly lit chandeliers were reflected in the polished parquet floor.

Now, when I looked in through the open door I saw that although four palms still decorated the table, the cloth was dirty, cigarette stubs and empty vodka bottles were everywhere. The floor was muddy. There were no waiters. Soldiers sat at the table smoking and drinking. Although the chandeliers were still bright, the room did not sparkle any more.

I looked on for a few minutes then returned to my place on the floor. I was glad that Michael was going to bring me food. He returned with a mug of hot broth and two small pies stuffed with buckwheat guel and dried mushrooms.

Half an hour before the train was due, Michael and I went to the end of the platform. Getting on board was very similar to the experience at Tomsk.

Michael occupied two upper berths, one for himself and one for me.

Two other girls got on board. They sat on the floor in the passageway among the soldiers. They were young and happy. One was called Mania, the other Sania. They laughed, joked and sang with the soldiers. When the soldiers played cards, the girls joined in.

They did not stay in the passageway for very long. Soldiers in the compartment next to ours gave up one of their lower berths to them.

All the next day Mania and Sania were the center of attention. They brought gaiety light and sunshine to the car. I thought they were exactly what the soldiers needed and told Michael that the girls were very very nice.

Michael looked at me grimly and said "They ought to know better than to mix with the soldiers. I am afraid they will not reach their destination. One can not tease a pack of hungry dogs with a bone and get away with it". He closed his eyes and turned towards the wall.

Next day the train was delayed for four hours because of a heavy snow fall. The girls and the four soldiers from the same compartment left the train and went down town. I watched them through the window. The men had their arms around the girls, one on each side. They sang as they marched.

The men returned just before the train left, but the girls did not. When the train had gained full speed and the station faded in

the distance, I heard the window of the next compartment opening and felt a cold draft of fresh air. Looking out I saw a suitcase flung out. It opened as it fell to the ground and the wind caught and scattered blouses, petticoats, stockings and handkerchiefs.

I heard a voice saying "Goodbye Mania!"

Then as a second suitcase followed scattering its contents I heard another voice saying "Goodbye Mania!"

I thought I could hear the girls laughing. I thought I could hear them singing. They were so happy, so decorative!

So this was the war, this the revolution. The soldiers my brothers!

I closed my eyes and turned back to the wall.

We reached Chita without any further incidents. Here Michael had to change trains while I remained on it as far as the Manchurian border.

Before leaving, Michael brought me another meal. He told me there was nothing to worry about any more. It would be plain sailing from here on. The train would be less crowded, there would be fewer soldiers and more civilians. It was only twenty four hours to the border.

He was right, as usual. There were no more passengers in the passageway. Every one had a berth and only a few soldiers remained in my car. There was a normal group of civilians, men, women and children.

I had not opened my suitcase since leaving Tomsk nor had I changed my clothes. I had slept without undressing. It would be more accurate to say that I had dozed rather than slept after the incident at Semenovka, waiting for some further development.

Now when conditions had become more or less normal, I suddenly felt very tired, but could not go to sleep. The night seemed endless

as I waited for the coming of day and the Manchurian border.

At station "Manchuria" on the Manchurian border a cold wind tore at my hat and coat while six foot Chinamen tore at my suitcase. This was a familiar scene. I felt that I had finally reached a place of sanity and security. The strange world of violence and madness was left behind - on the other side of the railroad tracks.

I permitted one of the Chinese porters to store my luggage in the baggage room having decided to spend the day visiting my cousin Galina and her husband Alexis who lived here.

Alexis was employed by the Russia-Chinese railway company as chief inspector at the Customs House. I would let him worry about my train reservation.

Galina and Alexis frequently stayed at our home in Harbin. They usually spent their vacations and holidays with us.

They were delighted to see me and surrounded me with the warmth of true Russian hospitality.

I plunged suddenly into normal living conditions. Had a luxurious hot bath and put on Galina's clean clothes.

We ate in the dining room, served by a butler. It was a regular, four course dinner. An entree of smoked herring, red caviar, olives, cheese and wine; chicken with dumplings was brought in next, followed by a meat loaf, baked potatoes, pickled pears, crab-apples and apples. We had lady fingers with whipped cream for dessert.

Conversation at the table was about the weather, mud slides along the tracks, theater, music and events at home in Harbin. Father had gone hunting and returned with a huge bear. How the railway society in Harbin was tasting smoked, baked, broiled and boiled bear meat.



War and revolution were far away. It was only mentioned in passing that a new army against the red terror was being formed on the Manchurian border.

I did not want to talk about my recent experiences and Galina, sensing this immediately, kept the conversation flowing in other channels.

It seemed strange to sleep between clean white sheets that night in a comfortable bed.

Yes, here life seemed to be normal once more. Violence, madness and insanity, all these had been left behind.

I had nothing to worry about. I heard Alexis telephoning for a first class reservation for me to Harbin. He stressed that it was to be a ~~ft~~ two berth compartment with the upper berth down so that I could have it to myself.

On December 19th 1917 I reached Harbin.



Life at home remained unchanged. The house was gay and crowded. Chrysanthemums were everywhere. Preparations for the Christmas holidays were going at full tempo. There was an abundance of food and wine, as usual.

Nina and Kathy were not with us this year, but they were not missed. The crowd was too large to make their absence noticeable.

I was immediately swept off my feet in the whirl of social activities. Sleigh rides, the theater, etc.

There were only occasional remarks on the conditions in Russia. It was taken for granted that this was only a "temporary madness".

At the New Year celebration many toasts were proposed to the glory of the "White" army and the return of the old Russian regime.

Early in January 1918 the "White" army appeared to be advancing on all fronts.

The independence of Siberia was declared at Tomsk, the capital. The Institute of Higher Education at Tomsk announced that it would be functioning through out the year of 1918 and advised it's students to return.

By January 10th 1918, a group of sixty students was formed to return to Tomsk. I was one of them. The railway company provided us with a special third class carriage. We had plenty of food. Everyone was equipped with a basket containing roast chickens and beef for the first two or three days. Then came hard boiled eggs and baked ham, Finally salami and cheese for the rest of the journey. There were varieties of cookies, pies and cakes. Food we had not seen in Tomsk the previous year, and certainly did not expect to see this year.

It was a pleasant two week journey - with student songs and pots of boiling water for making tea in every compartment.

At Tomsk life also appeared to be unchanged except for longer bread and sugar queues - the food situation had become worse.

By the beginning of April <sup>1919?</sup> conditions on all the fronts had changed. The "White" army was retreating and the "Red" army was approaching Tomsk. Most of the landladies asked the students from Manchuria to leave as Manchuria was politically a "white" territory opposing the "reds". People in Russian territory occupied by the "reds" were terrified of being accused of shielding the "whites.". The university also suggested that it would be best for the Manchurian students themselves to leave the university and the town, if they left for home as soon as possible.

The Trans-Siberian Railway Company provided a freight car for us. International military armies were moving back and forth along the Trans-Siberian railway and our freight car was attached to the American military train moving to Vladivostok.

We had no food baskets with us this time, and hardly any food could be obtained along the way. Once in a while the Americans supplied us with their rations. We had plenty of cigarettes. We sang and smoked keeping the little wood stove in the center of the car burning as it was still cold in Siberia.

By the end of April we reached Harbin.

On my arrival home I was surprised to find the house quiet. It was about 5 p.m. Mother was out as usual. Natasha also was not home. This was normal, but that there were no guests in the house gave me a pleasant start. It was so beautifully quiet.

Our aunt Olga was the only one to greet me. She said that father had a bad headache and was resting in his room. She also said that Tania and Frocia had already moved to our summer residence in Old Harbin. Tania had written me a note saying she was expecting me for dinner.

I left my suitcase unpacked and started off towards Old Harbin.

When I entered our old park I was shocked. The part surrounding our house had always been the most beautiful section. Now the grass was a dusty brown. Dry, fallen branches littered the paths. The shrubs were dead. A few sickly rose bushes grew in the rose garden. There were no more cannas or gladioli in front of the entrance. They were replaced by an untidy pile of sand. Only the elm trees stood high and mighty whispering to each other about what was going on.

I turned toward our part of the park. Thank God it was still an oasis among the dust and dirt. The grass was fresh and green. The shrubs rich with buds. A chinaman in a large straw hat was working in the vegetable garden. There was a scent of freshly turned earth and spring in the air. I smiled to myself. Then suddenly, I caught a glimpse of light reflected from the shining windows of the little white house hidden behind the elms. I remembered Frau Hock and a shiver ran down my spine. For one split second I thought that there was something evil about that cottage. Then I realized that I was tired and hungry. The journey had been long and hard. We had been very crowded and cold. There was no fresh air. The car had been filled with smoke from the stove and the cigarettes.

I did not have much time for speculations. Tania and Frocia had rushed out to greet me. They had left the door open and dinner smelt delicious. They had prepared my favourite dishes. A chicken broth served with puff pastry pies filled with chicken and rice. A roast leg of pork surrounded by potatoes and apples; home made ice cream for dessert.

While we ate, Tania brought me up to date with events at home. Our brother Serge ran away from school one morning and joined the "white"

army recruits on the Manchurian border. Mother was very busy. In addition to her usual activities at the orphanage, she was preoccupied with the problems of Russian refugees. The Russian intelligentsia fled to Harbin from persecution and terrorism in Russia. They needed food, shelter and jobs.

Father frequently suffered from severe headaches which had started in the beginning of the year. He was irritable and objected to noise and slamming doors.

"I think", Tania said "he goes to all the doctors in Harbin and takes all kinds of medication. The house smells like a hospital. I could not stand it any longer so Frocia and I moved here as soon as the warm weather began".

"Anyway", she continued "there was no more fun after you left. Natasha spends most of her time in front of a mirror or goes roller-skating with her boy friends. She is never at home. The house is always empty".

Then somehow the subject switched to spiritualism.

"Remember Frau Hock?" Tania asked me.

"I certainly do!" I replied. Once again I felt a shiver down my back. There was something wrong with this cottage.

"Did you ever solve the mystery of how the <sup>ouija</sup> switchboard operated; how we got the name Ida?" Tania went on. "You were so sure Lialia that you would find the answer some day".

"No" I shook my head. "I think it must have been some kind of hypnosis. Frau Hock had been so intense that her thoughts were transferred to us and affected our subconscious mind. I have not had much time to speculate about it".

"So you really do not know". Tania began again. "Lialia you had

been so sure you would solve these problems. Never mind, I will do it for you. One of these days when you come into the park you might find me hanging from one of these trees. In the evening I will come and turn off your light, then you will know that it is my spirit".

"This is absolutely ridiculous" I replied. "You will never find anything and certainly will not let me know of anything. If I believe, no proof is necessary. If I do not, I will always find some kind of mechanical explanation or other!"

This sort of conversation was quite common between us. Frocia never liked it so she interrupted by bringing in the ice cream. Then she asked me about my plans for the summer.

I said that I hoped to get a job in a surveying and grading as this was one of the compulsory subjects in civil engineering and a summer working for any classified department was considered to be equivalent to a year's course on surveying including the examination. I was anxious to get this work out of my way.

Tania told me that father had just organized a group for the survey and grading of the outskirts of the town for a new development. He had just employed one of the refugee engineers and a few Chinese workmen but still needed an assistant for the engineer.

I talked to Father about it the next morning and he told me I could have the job if I liked. I would have the title of an 'assistant engineer' but my salary would be that of a Chinese worker, i.e. one rouble a day. The hours would be from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. six days a week. I would have to do whatever the engineer wanted me to do.

I was thrilled at the thought of being an assistant engineer and at having the survey out of my way. The money and long hours were of no importance. I began work the very next day.

Now my life was full again. I was an engineer on my first assignment!

I joined a philosophy club which met once a week from 8 p.m. to midnight, sometimes much longer than that. I also joined a physics club with weekly meetings and approximately the same hours.

The other days of the week I went to the place nearest me at the end of the working day. Our assignments took us from one side of the town to the other.

If I was close to New Harbin I would go home for dinner and join Natasha's crowd for an escapade in the neighbouring Chinese town. Natasha had graduated from grammar school in spring and was planning to enrol in the Institute of Oriental Languages in the Fall. Therefore she was interested in Chinese night life.

Sometimes we went for a boat ride on the river or roller skating. Each time returning home about 3 a.m.

If I was nearer Old Harbin I would stay with Tania and Prosia for the night. Tatiana would come over. She was now Tania's friend rather than a no. They had their own jokes and secrets.

This ~~about surprise~~ surprised me. Tania was just a little girl, full of life and joy. She had always been my pal, but not like Tatiana. She was rather like my little Kecky, a kid sister that I was fond of, while Tatiana and I had been comrades in action. Now Tania had replaced me.

I did not mind, they were both little girls now.

I enjoyed my evenings with them except that here again we would not go to bed until one or two in the morning.

I would have to be up at 4 a.m. to be at work on time as I had a five mile walk to the New town and another two miles to the administration building where we usually met for the new assignment.



By the middle of June my enthusiasm for the work lessened. It had now become routine. I had really been capable of doing what was required when in the fifth grade of the grammar school. There was not much mathematics to be used, but there were many miles to move across and long hours of standing under a hot scorching sun. It required physical endurance.

I wanted to be an engineer to fight "Nature". "Nature" was beautiful, but it was not gentle, far from it, it was cruel. I needed the endurance.

I could drop my other activities, but they were a part of my mental development - my learning of the prospective comprehension of the universe. All this was part of endurance.

So I had to go on.

I was very tired.

By the end of June we had news about my brother. Father received a note from one of the soldiers who was fond of Serge to let him know that Serge was in prison in Vladivostok awaiting execution by a firing squad as a deserter from the Army.

Serge was not yet thirteen years old. I remembered the episode at Semenovka and Mania and Sania. Then it had been the violence of soldiers who recognized no law or order. Now it was the commanders who, in accordance with law and order, condemned a child to death. They were ready to put a 13 year old boy in before a firing squad. It was the commanders who should be placed before a firing squad for recruiting children who ran away from home to play soldiers. I was bewildered and shocked.

There was no drama or hysteria at home.

Father simply went to the telephone and contacted the telegraph

office using it continuously for the next twelve hours. Message  
after message went back and forth ~~continuously~~ between the commanders  
in Vladivostok and our home.

office using it continuously for the next twelve hours. Dispatch after dispatch was transmitted back and forth between the commanders at Vladivostok and our home. Finally after the twelve hour continuous contact with Vladivostok father received an official statement that Serge would remain in prison for another month or so and would then be released and returned home on parole.

Life continued it's normal course.

One day, about the middle of July I received a message from Tania on my return home. She was asking me to come for dinner the next day. So I went.

There were only Tania, Frocia and I. Tatiana was on holiday in Vladivostok.

The night was warm and clear. The moon bright. Grasshoppers chattered in the grass. The trees, as always, whispered continuously.

Tania was full of vibrating gaiety. We climbed trees. She would clamber to the very top and balance rocking back and forth.

Frocia became disgusted with us and went to bed early.

Tania continued to laugh and dance among the trees.

"Remember Lialia", she asked me, "how we used to play at being water nymphs in the tall grass on hot summer nights? After midnight we would leave our beds, climb through the windows and run nude across the park in the moonlight, hiding in the shade of the trees until we reached the field of grass. We would plunge into it and pretend we were swimming in a green ocean - an ocean of grass".

At 11 p.m. she went to the kitchen to pack my lunch for the next day.

"You may go home on the 11.00 train. I will walk with you to the station" she said. I objected. I had planned to stay the night, but she insisted that I go home and have a good nights sleep.

office using it continuously for the next twelve hours. Message  
after message went back and forth ~~continuously~~ between the commanders  
in Vladivostok and our home.

"Just think, you will have five hours of sleep. You will be close to your place of meeting" she said.

I agreed.

She took me to the train that night. She was waving as the train pulled out and was still waving until she disappeared from sight. I was very surprised and touched. We were not a sentimental family.

I overslept that morning. The telephone woke me up and I heard mother's voice saying "Is she alive? Call the doctor immediately. I shall be there as soon as I can".

She entered my room and said "Tania shot herself. Frosia went to her room this morning and saw her on the floor the revolver near her hand and the blood. I am going there; are you coming with me? Run and hire a hackney coach. It will be quicker than harnessing our horses.

She was putting up her hair rapidly as she talked.

I slipped a dress over my head and ran out to get a coach. As mother was getting in I asked her "Do you think Tania is alive?"

"I do not know" she answered, but I do not think so. She always said that if she ever decided to shoot herself she would place the revolver close to her temple so that there would be no slip."

After that we did not talk any more.

Waiting, waiting for the coach to reach it's destination.

Approaching our grounds we saw the doctor in from of the iron gates.

I felt mother stiffen, all her features seemed to be suddenly frozen, yet her voice was distinct.

She said without looking at me "There is no need to hurry any more. She has left us. The doctor would not be at the gates if she needed him He would be with her".

She stopped the coach and went to meet the doctor.

My throat felt paralyzed. I could hardly breathe, but I would not accept her statement.

I jumped out, ran between the accacias, over the fence and straight across the park towards the humble cottage hidden behind the elms.

Subconsciously I was aware of the clear blue sky, the bright scorching sun. The air was still, not a bird chirped, not a broken twig fell to the ground. The elms stood silent, there was no whispering among the trees.

I could only hear my heart<sup>t</sup>beating and the sound of my running bare foot over the soft grass.

I saw Frocia standing near the cottage. She was white as chalk. Her lips were tightly drawn. A broad crease marked her forehead. It stretched from one of her eyebrows straight up. It had not been there before. She did not notice me as I passed by.

Natasha stepped out of the door as I was entering. Her eyes and nose were already swollen, tears were running down her face.

"Is she alive?" I asked. She only shook her head. Loud sobs were her answer.

Natasha had been staying ~~with~~ the previous night with a girl's friend who lived in Old Harbin. As the girl's mother was a trained nurse the doctor had called her immediately. That is how Natasha was the first to reach the cottage.

I stepped into Tania's room. She lay on the floor in front of the mirror. The fingers of her outstretched right hand were touching the revolver. There was a puddle of blood under her head. I could see that her right cheek was bruised and the eyes partly shot away.

I called her softly "Tania! Tania!". There was no answer, no motion. She had reached "Nirvana". She was so happy, so gay. She went laughingly.

I felt a pressure and pain in my chest, but no sob came. I felt the burning in my eyes, but no tears ran down.

Mother and the doctor were coming in. I left the room feeling frozen to the bone.

According to the doctor, Tania had died about midnight.

Only a few things about the next few days registered in my mind.

It was a very hot day, the windows of the cottage were open. I remember the coffin covered with flowers in the front room.

Mother sitting near the coffin with a fan in her hand keeping the flies off Tania's face.

I remember, we - the young people - carrying the coffin all through the Old Town before placing it on the funeral coach.

Next we were at the cemetery throwing pine branches into the open grave.

I do not remember how we got to the cemetery, nor do I remember the service in the church in the new town. I found out later that father had collapsed ~~in~~ during the service and had been carried away and taken home.

He was a man over six feet tall, weighing about 300 lbs. His fall near the coffin where we all stood, could not go unnoticed.

But I did not see it.

I remember coming home after the funeral. All the windows were shuttered, the door bell disconnected.

The old and the young crowded outside the closed doors of our home.

They had shared our gaiety and now wished to share our grief, but none were admitted.

This was the first disaster in our family life - the first real blow. We took it hard.

Mother and Natasha were crying together in mother's bed. Father was confined to his bed. Aunt Olga with swollen nose and red eyes, was taking care of him. Frocia was sobbing into the pillow in her room.

I lay on the bed in my room and kept the light burning all through the night, waiting for Tania to touch the switch. But the light never went out. Tania slept quietly in her "Nirvana" and no disaster or joy would ever touch her. She left this world laughingly. I wished I could cry.

For the next few days meals were served and carried away untouched.

One morning Mother came out of her room

"This is enough" she said. "Let us all go and have tea with Tania. We really should not have left her alone for so long. She is still in the park, probably climbing the trees. She will be glad to have us all together with friends around the large table outside her hut."

So we went and sat around the table served as Tania would have liked to have it, with all her favourite pastries and pies, except that nobody touched the food.

The trees were whispering again - gossiping. The humble hut looked on sarcastically evil.

I could not stand it for very long. I wanted to get out in the open space where the wind could blow into my face. I could not breathe. I needed fresh air.

So I left the table and went to walk along the railroad tracks.



We often used to do that.

I craved to get somewhere where nobody could see or hear me. Where I could raise my face to the sky and howl like a wolf to the moon at night.

But as soon as I reached the tracks our doctor called me. He had been with us at the table and followed me when I left.

"I have to talk to you" he began. "You are the only person who is more or less composed in your house at present. Everybody else is hysterical. It is impossible to talk to anyone else. I have been your doctor and personal friend for many years. I know your financial situation. You are living on your father's income".

"Not one of you realizes how serious the condition is. Your father is a very, very sick man. You know he has had diabetes for many years. At first he did not pay any attention to it. During the last few years he started visiting all the doctors in town never telling any of them that he had been to the others. In addition he used his medical knowledge to cure himself. He has finally poisoned his organism beyond any possibility of recovery.

"After he collapsed at the church I had an opportunity of examining him thoroughly. He has a maximum of six months to live".

"As soon as he stops working you will become penniless".

"I am advising the railroad commission to send your father to Japan to recover his health".

"He will receive a very high allowance during his stay in Japan, which I hope will be for six months. Your mother will have a chance to save adequate funds for her future and your educations. I have tried to talk to her but she will not listen. She is in a hysterical condition I could not reach her. I thought you might be able to explain things

matters to her better than I. It is urgent".

I told him that I did not know anything about our financial affairs or about father's health, therefore I had no authority to speak on the subject. "However doctor, it seems to me" I said, "that if the allowance is made by the railroad company to aid his recovery in Japan, it should be spent there on his health and living, otherwise it is taking money under false pretences. I also do not see why money should be so important that we need talk about it. Will it bring Tania back?"

"Now doctor" I continued, "may I leave? I would like to walk alone."

He went back and I went forward. Tania was gone. Father was doomed to die. There was nothing I could do. There was nothing anyone could do. The dark clouds gathered over our heads.

Oh! how I wished then that I could follow Sophia Alexandrovna's teaching of long ago and stretch my hand out of the darkness to Jesus so that He could lead me on to the open path.

But I had no faith in God. Jesus was only a man persecuted for his faith.

I stood alone to face the world of grief, poverty, war, revolution and violence. A world that had neither sunshine nor music.

It was dark when I returned. Passing through the Park I saw a figure standing motionless beneath an elm. The back was towards me, I saw two braids hanging down to the waist and an arm around the tree. "Tania" I called. I was shaking.

The figure turned quickly "No, it is only I".

It was Tatiana. She too had worn her hair in two braids like Tania until she had started to work. Tonight she had put her hair down again.

"You know?" I asked her.

"Yes I do. I read about her funeral in the Vladivostok newspaper. A foolish little girl! I came here to say goodbye. Do you think she is still here? No, you do not know. Nobody knows. Oh! Lialia, why did you have to move to New Harbin? Look at the park. Remember how beautiful it used to be? I had always thought of your park and your home as my home. Why did you have to leave Harbin and go to university? Why did we have to grow up? Perhaps it is better for her so. Goodbye Tania".

As she talked she had been looking at the park. Now she turned to me saying "I am going home now. I shall probably see you tomorrow".

She left, and I returned to the cottage.

Everybody was still at the table which was lit up by a strong light at the entrance. There was a new guest among them - a forest ranger, ~~KX~~ Vasily Nicholaevich Ostapoff.

I had known him since my first visit home with grandmother and had always liked him very much, so I went and sat beside him.

"Are you going to work tomorrow?" mother asked me. Then, without waiting for a reply, continued "You have been absent from work for the last five days. You will probably lose your job unless you

start soon. At any rate it is best for you to go to bed now. In this light you look positively green".

Ostapoff interrupted her. Looking at me with kind, sad eyes and gentle smile he said " I hear you are working as an assistant engineer. This is great!"

"I wonder if you would like to be transferred to my department. We are surveying the land around Shitohedze, you know where our home is. It is a difficult job since there are woods, mountains and hills. You know the land. There are only two of us working at present, I and another young ranger. Be a pal, give a hand to a hard working man".

He stopped, lit a cigarette and began sending small rings of smoke into the air one after another. It was a habit of his and I remembered how it used to amuse me when I was a little girl.

"Your salary would be only 30 roubles a month" he continued, but you may stay with us. My wife would be glad to have you. She is saving money for a new carpet for the front room so that if you could pay 15 roubles for your room and board she will be delighted. Our food is inexpensive. We grow all our own vegetables and use our own butter milk and honey. We have the cow, chickens and pigs and hunt game in the woods, we also catch fish in the mountain streams. Well, what do you say?"

"Why don't you go?" mother urged. "There is nothing here for you to do."

Getting up Ostapoff said: "I will arrange your transfer and get you a railroad pass".

Had this happened a month earlier how thrilled I would have been and how delighted Tania would have been for my sake. Now it was an opportunity to escape from Harbin - escape from home. I accepted.

The station of Chitohedze was situated in one of the most scenic spots along the railway. The population consisted of the personnel of the railway and the two forest rangers - Ostapoff and his assistant Ivan Petrovich Semenov.

The rangers were forest men. They did not belong to the railway society. Their salaries were low, but as I had mentioned previously they were our hosts and our guides on our excursions into the wilderness. We visited their homes and ate with them. As children we had looked up to them as our heroes and friends.

When father went on inspection tours of the silvicultural stations and forests he usually hunted with the rangers.

They worked together and played together. They were his companions sharing their food and tents with him. In our home they were accepted as close friends although they never joined in the formal and social activities. They were forest men and realized they did not belong in high society.

Ostapoff's two bedroom house was small and neat.

Anna Semenovna Ostapoff was a small blond, just as neat as her house. She enjoyed housework and cooking. She knew how to make her home warm and her man happy.

There were no servants with exception of one coolie who took care of the yard, looked after the pigs, brought wood into the house and built the fire in the stove for Anna Semenovna.

Ostapoff said that his Anna had to have a man in the yard because his own duties took him away from home most of the time.

According to Ostapoff, Locado, the Chinese servant was a good man and a good worker. He lived near by, behind the Ostapoff's corn field and returned to his small hut for the meals he shared with his large family.

Ivan Petrovich lived in a cabin next to Ostapoff's house and

During our first meal Ostapoff told me that there would be no surveying the following morning as he had to go on an inspection trip of the North Ridge. He would have gladly taken me with him were it not for a twelve hour day in the saddle, which he considered was too much for me.

Instead he suggested that I should go hunting with K Ivan Petrovich in the neighboring woods since hunting small game for our meals would be part of my duties.

At sunrise next morning Ivan Petrovich and I set off, and my life with the Ostapoff's began.

Looking back on the short time I spent with them, I appreciate people like the Ostapoff's more and more.

They were simple, kind folk with no <sup>higher</sup> ~~great~~ education, however living close to nature they acquired wisdom, an understanding of others and endurance. They worked hard and never complained taking as it came. They enjoyed their holiday gatherings, singing and dancing. They were the Russian people.

I was treated as an honoured guest. I was never left alone. Most of my time was spent with the men. We rose with the sun and went to bed at sunset.

We surveyed, hunted and fished. Sometimes Ostapoff took me with him on inspections of the forest. He taught me how to find my way through the woods by the stars, how to predict weather by the intensity of their beams and their blinking.

These were the things I had loved as a little girl.

I realized that Ostapoff was trying to entertain me, to ease my grief, so I laughed and pretended to be gay, to enjoy everything, including the food.

At night I would leave the light on in my room waiting for Tani

o put it out.

During these long night hours I realized that death was inescapable unless we believed in the eternal life that Jesus had promised.

Hundreds and hundreds of people were dying daily all over the world. War and revolution surrounded us. We discussed it, but did not feel the tragedy of death nor the disaster of the refugees. Now I vividly recalled the station master at Semenovka and thought about his family. I remembered Mania and Sania. I could still hear their laughter.

I went further back to my first visit to Chinese towns and villages - to my first impressions of poverty and the misery of life there. I again saw the fire in Jimbirek, the ravine, the ghastly faces of the crowd. This time I understood their horror.

At sunrise the majestic tops of the rugged ridge soon veiled in cloud, but the fantastic design of the cliffs which resembled ancient temples no longer roused any aesthetic feelings in me.

As I watched the graceful flight of birds in the woods I remembered the owl and the tragedies that take place in the forest during the night. That made me think of our hunting and the pheasants in the fields.

Every living organism, including man, must destroy another in order to live. That was the law of "Nature". I brooded on the purpose of our existence and I was frightened. I recalled grandfather's words: "Be honest, be brave and place your trust in God. Cowardice is the root of all evil".

I had broken two of grandfather's laws. I was a coward - I was afraid of life and I had no trust in God.

Like Eve, I had bitten into the forbidden "apple of knowledge"

and the taste was bitter.

By the beginning of September 1918 the "Red" army had retreated behind the Ural Mountains. Siberia was once again in the hands of the "Whites" and the Trans-Siberian Railway had been seized by the Czechoslovaks.

I had completed the period of surveying required<sup>by</sup>/the Institute for credits and was ready to go back to school. I wanted to return to Tomsk, to the happy student atmosphere. I search of the unknown I hoped to bury ugliness and only remember beauty.

Before leaving Chitohedze I decided to spend a day in the mountains alone. I wanted to meditate and recapture my love for wilderness and nature. I set off across the rugged country at sunrise listening the the morning song of a lark accompanied by a chorus of other birds.

My destination was the summit which was still wrapped in pale pi clouds of early morning. I climbed over the prostrate trunks of fallen trees, up cliffs covered with gray moss. I passed through a ravine filled with luxuriant ferns. I picked wild grapes and gather the nuts I came across.

I found a hidden path which passed through thick brush and wound around steep cliffs. It formed narrow ladders across the craggy mountain then led to a green meadow and continued it's way along a mountain stream.

The sun was on it's downward journey when I sat down near the water to eat my lunch. I was not hungry because of the grapes and nuts I had sampled along the way and, absorbed in the mysterious path I had not noticed the time.

The summit ; now wrapped in a thick gray cloud looked distant and forbidding.

Suddenly I noticed a plant bent under the weight of a large



pod. There were no flowers but I recognised the plant. It was not a native of the mountains but the purple flowered poppy - the source of opium.

Now I knew that the hidden path would lead me to a secret field of opium near by.

For a second I stood motionless looking at the evil plant, then I plucked the pod, put it in my pocket, turned and ran across the meadow into the brush in a direction opposite to that of the path.

I knew very well that where there was a field of opium there would be outlaws and Chinese desperados. According to the owners of the field I was as dangerous as a rattlesnake. If I was caught they would not let me go at any price. They would ask a ransom for me, they would cut me to pieces for it, but still they would not free me.

I remembered what the rangers had often told us when we were children. "If you ever see an opium plant, pick it up, then report immediately to the leader of your group. If you are alone, walk rapidly in the direction opposite to that which you had followed. Keep to the bushes, be careful and silent. Never let anyone know that you had seen the opium plant until you reach the rangers. Remember that if you are caught by the owners of the field they will show you no mercy."

For the next two hours I cautiously made my way through thick brush down the steep hillside. Finally stopping ~~the~~ to check my direction I looked at the summit. There it stood like a giant bird stretching it's dark gray wings of clouds moved by the wind.

As I walked the dark clouds spread over the whole sky. Thunder shook the cliffs and lightning zigzagged across the summit. In a

pod. There were no flowers on it, but I recognised the plant.  
~~XX~~  
 and the purple opium poppy

moments the storm was above me, heavy rain poured straight down slowing my progress.

By the time the storm ended I had reached the ravine with the ferns I had passed on my way up. The sky was clearing, but it was already dark. A high craggy mountain separated me from Shitohedge.

I was trying to make up my mind whether to climb over the mountain or go around it when I heard shooting. It was coming from the direction of Shitohedze. I started to climb the mountain. The ground was slippery while a large round moon shining between the clouds threw fantastic shadows of cliffs and rocks distorting my vision. The shooting continued.

By the time I had reached the top of the mountain everything was quiet again. I stopped to rest. There were no lights in the village.

Suddenly a little red ball, accompanied by a shot, soared from the ground. It rose towards the sky and broke into a rain of multi-coloured stars. Other balls followed and a rain of stars poured over the dark village.

I stood almost hypnotized by the magnificence of the fireworks. A few minutes passed before I began to wonder why there were fireworks at Shitohedze. This was no holiday, not even a Sunday. If a celebration was to be held I would certainly have known about it in advance. I could only think of one solution.

My heart began to contract and I felt cold inside. I was suddenly certain that the Chinese bandits had seized the village and were celebrating their victory. It had happened before.

They would leave before morning taking a few hostages with them. Ostapoff would be one of these. I wondered if they would ever let



him go.

I wondered about the villagers - how many of them were killed, how many wounded.

I had to get close to the station to be on hand when the outlaws left.

Cautiously, hiding behind trees and rocks, keeping in the bush as much as possible I began to descend the craggy, steep slope.

The roosters had begun to crow when I reached the bottom of the mountain. The first pink glow of early morning appeared above the summits.

I heard the thud of a horses hoofs and saw Ivan Petrovich in the saddle. I called out and he galloped towards me.

"Thank God I found you and you are safe" were his first words.

"How is the village?" I asked.

"Oh! everybody has been worried about you" he replied, then asked "Did you see the fireworks? We were shooting almost allthrough the night to let you know your direction in case you were lost. We have just begun a search for you".

The joke was on me. I had been scared to death.

I remembered how thrilled Tatiana and I had been when we had been running away from bandits. We did not realize the danger then. Now I knew what it was.

"Bitter was the taste of the apple".

I also remembered Grandfather's words "Fear is the root of all evil".

The next day I left for Harbin.

On my return to Harbin I contacted my friends from Tomsk and heard that a group of students ~~returning to~~ school had already been organized. The railway company had promised to supply a freight car.

On my return to Harbin I contacted my friends from Tomsk and found out that a group planning to go back to school had already been organized and that the railway company had promised to supply a freight car in a few days time.

Mother was packing to leave for Japan with father where he was to enter a hospital in Tokyo. They left the evening of my return, Natasha accompanying them as far as Vladivostok.

Serge had been released from prison and was staying with Frocia in Old Harbin where he spent most of his time hunting with his former group of friends.

This was the Fall of 1918. The Bolsheviks controlled the central part of European Russia, while in the southern part a counter revolutionary "Volunteer Army" had been formed with the aid of the cossacks. Many of the southern provinces had declared their independence and supported the movement against the new regime. The North and the Far East were occupied by Allied forces. Ural and Siberia were controlled by the Czechs and local governments.

Civil war swept the country. There were continuous revolts against both sides of the Opposition, the Allied Forces and the local governments.

Just before our scheduled departure for Tomsk railroad engineers declared a strike against the management of the Trans-Siberian railway by the Czechs.

Trains only ran if a reckless officer of the "White Army" succeeded in kidnapping an engineer, putting a revolver against his temple and forcing him to operate the engine. These trains had no definite schedules or destinations. They moved only as long as the officer threatened the engineer. Train wrecks were frequent.

Under these conditions there was little hope that a freight

On my return to Harbin I contacted my friends from Tomsk and heard that a group of students ~~китайских~~ school had already been organized the railway company had promised to supply a freight car



car promised the students could, or would, be sent to Tomsk. The situation was far too indefinite.

During my last adventure at Shitohedge I had caught a bad cold, however it never occurred to me to call a doctor as I expected to set off for Tomsk at any moment.

Ten days passed with me spending all my time near the telephone ready to leave at a seconds notice.

My cold was worse, my head was splitting and I felt as if I was burning.

As soon as I returned to Harbin all memory of my life at Shitohadze was swept away, I was back to the time we sat at the table in front of Tania's hut where the family and her friends had gathered together to say our last farewell to Tania.

No matter where I sat now, day or night, I kept a light burning, waiting for Tania to turn it out.

The unusual silence of the house affected my strained nerves.

I could not stand it any longer, I simply had to get out. The only place I could think of was Tomsk - "the happy student atmosphere"

Finally I picked up my suitcase and left for the station to wait for a train. I was lucky. That evening a train stopped and as it was only the second one in a week it was packed.

A porter managed to put me and my suitcase on board the platform connecting two cars. Even this was crowded.

The train went straight through to Manchuria stopping only for water and fuel.

After two days of clinging to the platform railing I reached station Manchuria. Here I had to wait for another train.

I did not visit Galina this time. A train might leave at any moment.

The restaurant was open but I was not hungry, however I drank coffee every hour.

My cold appeared to have concentrated in the right side of my head. I could not determine whether it was my ear or tooth that ached.

On the second day a Czech military freight train pulled into the station. To my surprise the student car, which had been promised, was attached to it. My friends saw me and called. I boarded and was finally on my way to Tomsk.

An iron stove was glowing in the center of the car and a kettle boiling on it.

The longitudinal walls of our car consisted of sliding doors. Along each of the other two walls two large bunks had been built, one above the other, each designed to accommodate eight people. There were forty of us in the car. The men occupied one side and the girls the other.

A senior medical student in our group put a hot compress on my right ear, gave me two aspirins and a hot water bottle. I climbed into the upper bunk and went to sleep. When I awoke I felt much better. My ear began to drain.

It was a beautiful autumn afternoon. One of the sides was pushed open and girls were sitting on the floor dangling their feet outside. I descended, squeezed in among them and inhaled the autumn air rich with the scent of mushrooms and pine.

The train stopped at a small station for fuel and water. Opposite was a village with a pond in which two geese were paddling. One of the Czechs from the car next to ours jumped down and waving his sword high in the air ran after the geese.

A woman rushed out of a hut near by swearing and shaking her fist at the soldier, trying to protect the birds, a man followed her out of

the cabin attempting to pull her back in.

The Czech killed the birds and grabbing them by their bleeding necks proudly returned to the car while his comrades applauded.

Once again I remembered my grandfather and how he had said that his soldiers were protecting Russia so that a shepherd boy could lie on the grass without fear and the ducks could settle on the lakes.

Now there was no one protecting Russia. It bled as the geese were bleeding.

I left the girls, climbed back into my corner and taking more aspirins, slept again.

We had no baskets of food with us this time. The students left at an hour's notice and there had been no time to pack food. There was none to be obtained along the way. The train went straight through stopping only for fuel, ~~and~~ water and the distribution of rations. The Czechs supplied us with their rations.

That evening we received an extra - a canteen with goose stew accompanied by a note which said "With the compliments of the car next door". It was delicious.

The regular rations were poor. We were hungry, and so were the Czechs. Russians all over the country were hungry, so too was the family of the woman who lost her geese.

Eight days later the train pulled in to the junction where we were supposed to transfer to the local train to Tomsk. Because of the strike there was none.

We went to a village near by and hired four peasants with wagons to take us to Tomsk the following morning.

The weather was beautiful, we sang and laughed because we had made it, as we rode through the thirty miles of pine woods.

The forest was dark and mysterious as ever. The horses moved slowly. It was so peaceful and relaxing.

On arriving at our destination I immediately went to see Professor Petroff and was very pleased to learn that my room was waiting for me. Both he and his wife were glad to see me and invited to their evening tea.

During tea they told me of existing conditions in Tomsk. The food situation was critical. Food and clothing was continuously being stolen. Men and women were even killed for them. Robberies in the streets were common and people were afraid of going out at night. The barracks of the "White" soldiers were located on the outskirts of the town. Frequently, when they saw a young girl walking with a man they would call out to her, insist she was a friend, then knock the escort out and carry the girl off to the barracks. Sometimes several men would use the girl throughout the night.

Part of this I had heard before, however it had always happened far away, now it had come close.

Next morning I spent at the Institute, registered and then went to see the doctor. My ear was still draining. He told me that I had been very lucky. That I had had an infection of the middle ear but that it was now clearing up.

At that time there were very few girls registered at the Institute. Most of them went to the university. I did not see any of my friends that morning, so I went to the university cafeteria where we usually met for afternoon tea.

Six of the girls were there feeling very gloomy. They had been unable to find accommodation the previous night and had spent it at the railway station. They had been looking for rooms all day but there were none available.

My room mate had not returned with us but was expected later, so I felt free to suggest that the girls stay with me until they found places of their own.

None of the men students from Manchuria could find a place to stay in either.

The residents of Tomsk were afraid of the coming of the "Reds", the "White" soldiers, the Czecks and of the local government. They preferred to starve rather than rent a room to a student, especially to a student from Manchuria.

The news from Russia had been horrifying.

Lenin had said: "We are not waging a war against separate individuals. We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class".

The "Bourgeoisie" did not only include the aristocrats, but the whole intelligentsia of Russia and all the intellectuals.

The so-called "Red Terror" had reached it's peak.

War against the "enemy of the State" had been declared.

The Cheka (i.e. The Extraordinary Commission for the Suppression of the Counter Revolution) exterminated all those who were suspected of opposing the Soviet Government.

Their methods of persuasion to obtain political information were bloody and unscrupulous. Physical torture was used frequently.

The Ural region, which was close to Tomsk, had been the center of many battles. It was continually passing from the hands of the "Whites" into the hands of the "Reds and vice-versa.

All this was in the back ground of our existence at that time.

Returning to our immediate present.

Six girls came to stay with me over-night that afternoon. They were followed by ten men who came to spend the evening with us as they had nowhere to go.

Conditions were very grim, especially for the men.

Due to the prevalence of crime in the streets, the library was closed by six p.m. Students were allowed to take home all the books

they needed. No one was supposed to be out in the streets after dark.

The steady autumn rains began. It drizzled continuously day and night, the sky was gray the air damp and the streets muddy.

Weeks passed but the drizzle continued.

Seven of us were sleeping in a room for two. Two slept on the beds and five on the floor between the beds.

My room was just across the street from the Institute and two blocks away from the University, so it was convenient for the men students to drop in between lectures to catch up on their sleep while we were away. Their suitcases were in our room while they themselves spent the nights at the railway station.

The seasonal rain continued. Water dripped from the roofs, the last few yellow leaves on the trees were washed away. Dampness penetrated every house in the town. The grayness appeared to envelop every human and every other living creature. There were no chirping sparrows to be heard, just the steady beat of raindrops on the window.

Half a dozen muddy overshoes stood in the back entrance, our way into the house.

Some one or other was continuously either coming or leaving our room, the door of the back entry slammed back and forth letting the damp cold air in.

Seventeen of us spend the evenings and shared a meal in my room meant for two.

There was a small delicatessen store near by. The owner, a very old man had a stock of pickled herrings. A few large barrels stood in the center of the store, and a large fork was provided for customers enabling them to get the herrings out of the brine. They cost five kopeks each. There was nothing else to be purchased.

Every night we ate pickled herring with boiled potatoes which the cook boiled for us for a small payment.

We were far too crowded to study and spent the long evenings singing student songs accompanied by a guitar.

There were no more philosophical discussions, no further research into the unknown. We were all on edge and all tried to be gay.

Every night the men stayed longer and longer, delaying their departure to the railway station.





At the end of the week Mrs. Petroff told me that since my return her husband had been unable to concentrate on the preparation of his lectures nor could her child sleep. Furthermore she had received complaints from her neighbours because of the noise.

"When will your friends leave?" she demanded.

I assured her that my room mates would leave as soon as they found other accomodation, and promised that we would be quiet.

I reported my conversation with Mrs. Petroff to the others, but seventeen young men and women forced to stay in one small room can not keep quiet and so the music, singing and laughter continued.

A few days later Mrs. Petroff insisted that my guests leave otherwise she would have to ask me to leave with them.

After that I avoided meeting my landlady, sneaking out of the house, hiding around corners or going into the closet when she entered our room.

My room-mate arrived because the rail strike was under control. She did not approve of the crowd and felt that I had had no right to invite all these students to stay with us. She never missed an opportunity to show me her displeasure.

Winter descended. Temperatures dropped below freezing point and snow piled up in the streets. The men in our room stayed later and later.

One could feel an undercurrent of tension at school. The professor hearts were not in their lectures, the minds of the students were not on learning.

I could feel the fear, hunger and despair of the Toask population which was spreading throughout the university campus.

So this was the "Happy student atmosphere" I had been seeking.

Lying in bed I wondered how soon Mrs. Petroff would turn us out

of the house and where we would go.

Back to Harbin seemed to be the only solution. However, it was very probable that none of the men would get that far.

A Russian army officer called Semenov, supported by Koreans and Japanese was organizing military operations against the bolsheviks around Manchuria. He needed men badly and had not been very courteous to the male students on our trip to Tomsk. However, then we were with the Czecks and he wanted no trouble. There was little likelihood of his allowing the young men to cross back to Manchuria.

It was said that Semenov's slogan was "He who is not with us is against us" i.e. join the operation or be shot as a bolshevik.

Supposing we all did reach Harbin, what then?

Harbin was still floating in champagne "Wine and Women" was still the toast.

The Russian Zone in Manchuria was a small realm. It existed because of the railroad and was already over populated. There were no new openings in the offices of the railway company. The labour was Chinese - the hours long, the pay low. No caucasian could ever compete with yellow labour.

Russian refugees had arrived by hundreds - all educated, all intellectuals.

Prior to the war with Germany, i.e. before 1914, young men of the Harbin Society graduated from grammar school and were then sent by their parents to Petersburg, London or Berlin to complete their higher education. The girls were taken to Petersburg or Paris.

The war stopped all this. The young remained in town with nothing to do, except join the mass of social activities, but with a difference.

The older generation had come to the undeveloped Russian zone in Manchuria to civilize it, organize the railroad company and its society, build the town and develop the land. They had to keep up diplomatic relations with China and Japan, deal with the Chinese bandits and report to the Russian government.

They spent long hours at their offices and at meetings. Gave many formal dinners and had many social activities. They lived an intense mental life. By the end of the day they were tired and found relaxation in the old Russian tradition of music, dancing and singing.

They danced mazurkas and waltzed. They were rich and drank champagne. All they demanded of the women was that they be gay and charming.

At the start of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904 most of the men sent their families to Russia. They continued their work under the shadow of the threat of Japan and relaxed in the evenings with women and wine.

Thus had a Bohemian type of existence begun and the lozung "Wine and Women" been established.

The young generation had nothing of that sort. They had no work and no responsibilities, they only had mindless gaiety to fill their empty days. They gambled, drank and smoked and gladly accepted the "Wine and Women" motto.

The influence of this small group spread like a cobweb over the town. Eventually and inevitably the young people who remained in Harbin were caught in the web.

Members of this special youth society would never demean themselves by going to Tomsk - a provincial town in the depths of the Siberian woods.

Tomsk University had especially been established for the youth of Siberia. <sup>natives</sup> All the ~~natives~~ of Siberia who graduated with an ~~average~~ <sup>B</sup> of "B" from grammar schools were free to enrol without entrance examinations. Severe competitive examinations were required from other prospective students.

Most of the <sup>young people</sup> ~~students~~ who went to Tomsk were the children of village doctors, teachers, small business and industry proprietors, merchants and employees of the Trans-Siberian railway. There were many rich peasants in Siberia sufficiently broad minded to send their children to school.

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Most of the young people who went to Tomsk University were the children of village doctors, teachers, small business and industry proprietors, merchants, and employees of the Trans-Siberian railway. There were also many rich peasants in Siberia sufficiently broad minded to send their children to school.

Prior to 1917 there was no poverty in Manchuria except among the Chinese so that all the employees of the railroad company could afford to send their children to university even if it did mean penny pinching to some.

The majority of the students in Tomsk, including those from Manchuria had the same goal - to work for Russia and the Russian people. They all dreamed of bringing medicine, education, agriculture etc. to Russian villages. Were they now destined to be caught in the 'Harbin web?' It seemed so senseless. "Nirvana" was probably a better solution.

I got out of bed and went to the window. It was snowing. The fresh snow covered the ground like a soft warm blanket. It would be nice to go to sleep for ever under this white down. I was so very tired.

It was Elena Chenko, one of the six girls in our room, who came in next morning with a solution to our problem.

Elena was a Kirghiz. The youngest member of a single family tribe, and the first to be educated. Elena's family lived in the wilderness about 25 miles from the railroad, on the East Manchurian

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border. With the construction of the Russian Chinese railway the family began to supply it with wood and quickly became rich.

Elena was a bright little girl. Her father sent her to grammar school in Harbin from which she graduated with honours and the Gold Medal. Her family was very proud of her achievement and now, as far as money was concerned, the sky was the limit for Elena's education. He decided to become a doctor and came to Tomsk.

I had known Elena only slightly in Harbin as at that time Tatiana had been my only friend. At Tomsk it was the philosophical meetings which brought us together.

Elena was not exceptionally pretty. She was of medium height with broad shoulders. Her face was round with high cheek bones. Her dark round eyes shone brightly from behind thick lenses. As light attracts insects, so Elena attracted men, women and children. She was serious and thoughtful, studied <sup>very</sup> hard, and shared everything she had with anyone who was in need. She herself was one of the richest students from Manchuria.

Elena was my favourite and I gladly accepted her invitation to have a cup of tea with her at the cafeteria that morning.

Tapping her cigarette on the table Elena said she had noticed that demoralization and desperation were beginning to develop in our group.

She suggested that I should try and persuade Mrs. Petroff to rent her drawing room ~~to~~ to the six girls in our group for 300 roubles a month.

Elena argued that since the sum she mentioned was the professor's monthly salary, it would be very attractive to Mrs. Petroff, particularly as with the current prices for food, clothing and fuel professors were no longer rich.

She also thought that Dr. and Mrs. Petroff were very good, kind

people, morally incapable of turning the students out into the snow "Otherwise we would have been there long ago" she reasoned.

The drawing room was at the end of the hall. One of its doors next to our room. A dozen small tables and easy chairs were set along the walls. There was a piano in one corner. Two large settees with low tables in front of them, faced the fire place. A thick rug covered the floor. As far as I knew the room was never used by the family.

Elena said "The room is large enough to accomodate thirty or forty people. There would only be sixteen of us, including the men. Every one would have his or her own corner to study in during the evenings. We are all used to studying in the library that way. Let us say we will all work till midnight. Then the girls will sleep in your room as we do now and the men will stay in the drawing room for the night."

"You see Lialia", she continued, conditions will then be more normal. We will all sleep through the night and stay at the University through the day. The men will take their showers in the gymnasium hall as they do now, and will pay their share of the cost of the room."

"You may promise Mrs. Petroff that there will be no noise. If any of us break the rule, he or she will have to leave the community."

"Do not say anything about the men. The girls are renting the room".

It seemed to me that Elena's suggestion was logical and so I went to talk to Dr. and Mrs. Petroff. To my surprise they agreed and we became friends again.

Also to my surprise everything went according to Elena's plan. All the students started to work, except me. I had suddenly lost all interest in study and in living. I did not care whether I ever



became an engineer. I had no interest in philosophy, physics or astronomy. I came to the conclusion that the main problem of humanity was self preservation. I was too tired to fight for it. All I craved for now was "Nirvana".

One day Elena sat down on the edge of my bed and said "Lialia, if you do not start studying you will have troubles with your exams. You know you will have to sit some of them before Christmas".

The previous year Elena and I had had many philosophical discussions. We respected each other's opinions and enjoyed our debates. "Nirvana" had been one of our most popular topics, so that it came naturally to tell her that in my opinion "Nirvana" was the best solution to our problems due to current world conditions.

I told her how beautiful it would be to go to sleep for ever in the deep dark forest, turned to ice by the frost.

I tried to describe my vision of a full moon on a winter night in the pine forest: the fantastic shadows cast on the white snow by it's silver beam and the light glistening through the icicles; the fluffy tops of the trees covered with snow and rime, the sparkle of the pines decorated with diamonds and pearls.

"It would be wonderful to walk into the forest on a clear Sunday night" I said, "the stars would shine brightly over my head. The only sound would be that of distant church bells calling the people to prayer".

"I would lie deep in the snow under a slender pine in the enchanted forest, a paradise. Grandfather Frost would close my eyes and dreams would carry me away to 'Nirvana' where no joy or disaster could ever touch me and I would sleep in peace for ever."

Elena's voice was very sharp and clear as she asked me:-

"Is this what you are planning?"

I was surprised and disappointed. I had expected support and encouragement from Elena. I had even thought that she might like to join me, so my answer was curt. I only said:-

"No, of course not. I am only tired and want to rest", then I closed my eyes.

She left and I began to plan my last journey into the enchanted forest.

My original idea had been simply to leave for the woods on a clear Sunday night. On second thought I decided that there might be some complications. To begin with, I did not have the privileges of privacy this year. In addition, because of the number of crimes in the streets no one was supposed to be out after six in the evening. My absence would be noticed, a search would probably start before I reached Nirvana, especially since I had so foolishly spoken to Elena on the subject.

I finally decided to write myself a letter, supposedly from my aunt Olga in Harbin, saying that my parents would be spending the Christmas holidays in Japan so that there would be no one at home. However, an uncle who lived at Alapaevsk in the Ural region invited me to spend the holiday with him. As he did not know my address in Tomsk, he was sending his invitation through her.

Alapaevsk was only about two days by rail from Tomsk and at that particular time was occupied by the "Whites".

I read the letter to the group, told them that I had accepted the invitation, and as I was very tired would not wait for Christmas but would leave for Alapaevsk within the next few days.

I thought that in this way I would eliminate trouble for every one. My companions would think that I was with my uncle. At home

it would be taken for granted that I was at Tomsk. I hardly ever wrote to the family, and as this year I had a bank account, I did not expect any letters from home. It was very probable that my disappearance would not be noticed until next summer. There was no one really to grieve for me.

I began to pack my things immediately, intending to leave for the Junction next day. The woods surrounding the Junction were especially dark, deep and impenetrable.

Elena came to me and asked to read the letter. I gave it to her. I had taken the precaution of disguising my writing. She read the letter and then asked for the envelope. I produced that too. I had an old one from Harbin. Elena looked at it, then said: "This is an old envelope, you could not have received this letter today".

"Is it?" I replied, "Oh well, it should be here somewhere. I do not have the time to look for it right now. I have to pack. You do not need my used envelope".

She sat very still for a few minutes looking at me, then silently left the room.

Next morning I went to see Mrs. Petroff to explain my sudden departure. Dr. Petroff came out of his study to bid me goodbye. Shaking my hand he said that he had a man with a sleigh who would be glad to take me to the station. I thanked him and replied that it was quite unnecessary as I could hire one at any street corner.

Two girls stayed and studied in my room that day.

It was a very long wait. Finally the sun set and darkness settled over the town. I said goodbye to my friends and was ready to leave.

Barbara, one of the girls, said she would come with me to

see me off at the station.

This had not entered into my plans, but there was little I could do except pretend to be pleased. I hoped that she would not go all the way to the Junction with me. However, if she did, I could always buy a ticket to Alapaevsk, board the train and get off at the first small station.

We left the town and entered the woods. The night was clear, the stars shone brightly, and the stillness was only broken by the sound of the sleigh bell.

I noticed that another horse and sleigh had followed us all the way through the town and into the woods, there was no passenger in it. Suddenly I felt that something was wrong. The road we were travelling was not the one to the station. I mentioned it to Barbara intending to stop our conveyance. However she replied quickly:-

"This is the road to the Junction, I told the driver to take us there."

I stopped talking and looked about me. This was definitely not the road to the Junction. I was familiar with every turn, every tree along this one as I had used it every Saturday the previous year skiing to the Insane Asylum. How I had enjoyed those trips then. It seemed to be so long ago.

I told Barbara where this road was leading us to and she began to cry.

It was Elena who had talked to Dr. Petroff who had telephoned the Asylum. They had sent their sleigh for me, but to avoid trouble I had been allowed to have my way as long as possible. Barbara had volunteered to come with me, the Asylum vehicle was following. Barbara was weeping as she told me all this, while I laughed. The joke was on me. It really did not matter. I could not be kept there forever. Another new experience would not harm me. I would still have

my own way when I was released.

Barbara showed me the commitment papers just as we reached the Asylum. Getting out I put them in my coat pocket. She said "Lialia, I do not believe that you are ill".

"Neither do I", I replied.

The doctor, Lydia Petrovna Vologina, a tall, slim blonde, was waiting for us. She had a round face with grey eyes and a slightly snubbed nose. The smile on her full lips was charming.

"Which of you is my patient?" she asked.

I jumped up quickly from the chair I had been sitting in, pulled out the commitment paper from my pocket, and passing it to her, pointed to Barbara saying :-

"She is Lialia Baroff, your patient".

Barbara was a tall anaemic girl. Her dark eyes, set deeply in her thin face, were circled with bluish shadows. She had wept all the way to the asylum, her nose was swollen and her face stained with tears.

The doctor turned to her and Barbara began to refute my statement.

"Look at her Doctor" I continued, "can not you see that she is ill?"

Barbara appealed to me.

Lydia Petrovna suddenly rose from her chair and said:-

"Stop this nonsense. I will lock both of you up for the night. Tomorrow I will get someone from the town to identify you."

I looked at Barbara. She was near to tears again. I decided that it would be cruel to force her to stay at the asylum for the night so I admitted that I was the patient.

Barbara excused herself and left the room.

"Would you like to talk to me?" asked the doctor

I bluntly replied "No".

She then said that as it was late she would take me to the ward straight away and would interview me the following day.

We went through an iron door which she unlocked, along a long corridor. There were heavy locked doors on both sides. At the end of the corridor we entered a large square hall. Wooden benches were placed along the walls. A few heavy doors opened into the hall. Two nurses in white uniforms sat outside each one.

"This is the ward for the non-violent and recovering patients" Lydia Petrovna explained. "This room is the recreation hall. The rooms behind the open doors are the bedrooms. During the day the patients may leave their beds and come into this hall if they wish.

"Your room is ~~here~~ here" she said leading me through an open door into a large airy room with light furniture. The walls and ceiling were light blue. A soft blue light illuminated it.

A bed covered with a blue spread stood along one wall. Two easy chairs with a table between, were by the opposite wall. A large double window with iron bars protecting the glass overlooked the pine forest.

"I hope you will be comfortable here" said the doctor. "I am sorry you can not close the door. It is locked against the wall. The nurse outside the door is your nurse, you have nothing to fear. Try to rest tonight. Goodnight Lialia" were her parting words.

She left, and I went to the window. The night was cold and still. The sky was clear and the golden stars twinkled as if beckoning me.

I stood behind the iron bars of the window. It seemed ridiculous that I should be locked behind an iron door.

Thousands of intellectuals who wanted to live had been

executed by the "Reds", while I, who craved for everlasting peace, was locked in here, to be kept alive.

Thousands of men and women had been killed in the war. Thousands more were dying from starvation. There was not enough food in the country. An epidemic of relapsing typhoid caused by starvation was spreading through the nation. People were killing for food, but I who was tired ~~of~~ of fighting, who did not want to struggle for existence was to be kept in custody to be protected from death.

It was illogical. Those that wanted to live were killed. Those that wanted to die were being kept alive.

Soft singing came through one of the open doors, a laugh through another. Someone was weeping, another asking for tea. One was praying another swearing.

Standing behind the iron bars of my window I thought of the past and the present.

I recalled the early part of my life when the world consisted of sunshine and music. I wondered when and how I had lost that beautiful image. I wondered when and how I had lost my faith and trust in God.

A rosy line appeared on the horizon. The sun rolled out from behind the trees and a golden beam painted pink shadows on the white snow.

The patients in the ward began to wake up. Dancing and laughing, a ~~man~~ woman with black curls, ran into the hall. An old gray one pretended she was riding on a sleigh. Another, young one, was picking mushrooms off the walls.

I turned back to the window. The forest stood silent in its winter sleep.

My breakfast was brought in at 8 a.m. The doctor came in at 10.

On entering, Lydia Petrovna said accusingly:

"You did not sleep last night, nor have you eaten your breakfast."

"Do you think Barbara would have slept if you had locked her here last night?" I countered.

"Probably not" she replied, smiling at me, then continued:

"Tell me the story of your life Lialia. Begin with your childhood as far back as you remember and bring it up to the present".

So I told her all that I have written so far in this book.

I described my life in Simbirsk, the church bells, the blue and gold cupolas, the pearls on the golden crosses. I told her about my trips on the Volga, across Siberia to Manchuria and my wild life in Harbin. I did not forget my little keeky. Then I passed on to my first year in Tomsk, the trip back home. I told her about the incident at Lemenovka station and about Tania and Mania. I recounted my last summer at home - my work as an assistant engineer and my other activities, about our Tania leaving for Nirvana and my last trip back to Tomsk. I ended by describing the last few weeks of our communal living, stating that my life had been so full and active that now I was tired and would like to resign. "It seems to me" I said, "that at present the only place where I could rest is in Nirvana".

She listened to me very attentively and watched every move I made, every flicker of my eyes. When I ended she remained silent for a few minutes, then said:

"Lialia, I do not believe you are mentally ill. I do think that physically and biologically you are exhausted. You are a high-strung individual, your nerves are very tense, but you are far from a nervous breakdown. What you need is a good rest".

I interrupted her "So you brought me here to rest?".



he smiled at me charmingly and replied:-

"I did not bring you here. Your friends placed you in my charge. For the moment, this is the only place where I can keep you safe. Could you bear it for a short time? Until we get better acquainted and I can decide what should be done?"

I asked her whether Dr. Sokareff was here. We had been good friends when I attended his lectures on abnormal criminology. I thought it would be nice to have a friend here at this time.

She replied that he had died of a stroke that summer. He had been seventy years old.

Leaving the room Lydia Petrovna said she would see me again next day and in the meantime would lend me some books to read. I thought the books were unnecessary as an entirely new world was before me, just behind the open door. No books could describe the scenes I could see for myself.

Later in the day I stepped out into the hall and looked at the other rooms. All of them were large and airy, however, most contained six or four beds, some had two. None had any other furniture. I was the only one with a single room. There was a large dining room with long tables and benches. Apparently most of the patients ate in this room. So far, all my meals had been brought to my room on a tray.

I was a little shy of the patients around me and so made my exploration short.

As I was reentering my room, a tall woman in a black fitted dress caught me by the arm. Her fingers were cold and her grip tight. Her grey hair was neatly arranged in a high coiffure. Her dark eyes shone brilliantly from behind thick lashes.

She whispered into my ear: "You are new here. Are you one of us? Please, if you have an opportunity, would you pass this note

to the Grand Duke?" she placed a small piece of paper in my hand, as she continued to whisper "Count Kursky is searching for me all over the world".

A nurse led her away. I read the note which said:

"I am here, locked in the center of a large pine forest.

Always yours

Ekaterina"

I remained in my room for the rest of the day.

When the doctor came to see me next morning I gave the note to her.

Lydia Petrovna read it then told me that the woman was fifty years old. She was suffering from brain deterioration, megalomania and persecution mania. Sometimes she became violent and could be dangerous.

A few minutes later the doctor asked me if I would like to join her in interviewing some of the patients in my ward. I agreed.

She told me the history of a few of the patients.

The girl with the black curls who had run singing and dancing into the hall was Jewish. She was 25 years old, was married at seventeen and had three boys. During ruthless anti semitic riots her husband had been shot, and her three sons killed before her eyes. The children had been grabbed by their legs by men from the rioting mob who smashed their heads against the walls, because she was a beautiful woman she was not killed. After the ravage was over she was found in a barn, unconscious, raped and bruised. When she came to she became violent and so had been placed in the asylum. Her violence lasted for over a year. She no longer remembered the past but said she felt depressed and to cheer herself up danced and sang all day long, sometimes even through the night.

The old gray woman was known as 'Grandmother Shastova'. She was 85 years old and had lapsed into second childhood.

The girl I had seen picking mushrooms from the walls had been taken to the violent ward, she had hysteria and usually became violent after the 'mushroom picking'. I heard her story later, from the girl herself.

Lying in bed that night I wondered what there was attractive about our existence.

The new world I had faced that day contained nothing but tragedy.

I had forgotten how much beauty and sunshine I had received through my grandparent. I did not think of people like Ostapoff, who by their very existence brought happiness and joy to their neighbours and friends. I did not recollect the countless smiles Anna Petrovna received from the small, shining faces of children as thanks for her cookies. I did not remember that my fellow students had come to Tomsk to learn so that they could bring light, education and health to the needy population of Russia. Nor did I think of the sunshine they themselves had been getting through their hope of bringing it to others. I did not notice the sunshine Lydia Petrovna brought into the dark world of her patients. They all turned to her, their faces lit up and a gleam of intelligence appeared in their bemused gaze when she talked with them.

It never occurred to me that I too, could try to bring in the sunshine from behind the dark clouds. I only thought of the purpose of our existence.

Next morning entering my room, Lydia Petrovna asked me to go with her to visit a patient in the men's ward.

"He is not my patient" she told me, "but all the doctors take turns to visit him. I think you will find him interesting."

So we went along the long corridors separated by heavy locked iron doors. We finally reached a hall similar to the one in our ward. We stopped at the open door leading to a room similar to mine. The large double window overlooked the pine forest. The walls were light cream. The furniture was of natural oak and brown leather. A large desk stood against one wall, opposite to the bed which was covered with a brown spread with a cream design. Two armchairs and a music stand with a violin were in front of the window.

The occupant of the room, a six foot, slender man, bowed courteously as we entered. The profile of his biblical face with dark brown, melancholy eyes, was perfect. His long chestnut hair curled inwards at the shoulders. His eyes were laughing as he kissed our hands.

"So glad to see you Lydia Petrovna" he said, including me in his gesture. "Would you like to hear my new composition?" he continued "I just completed it last night. It may need some polishing, but would you like to hear it as it is?"

Lydia Petrovna said that we would be delighted. We sat in the armchairs and he took up the violin.

As his bow touched the strings the violin began to sing like a bird and weep like a child. It carried me out of the room, into the clouds, into another world. I saw the meadows where the birds were singing and the villages where the children were crying.

I looked at the musician. His eyes were light brown and transparent. He was not here, he was there where the sounds of the violin took him.

Suddenly there was a roar, an explosion, a volcanic eruption. I felt the heat, saw the lava. The violin was roaring.

He lowered the bow, but the notes still seemed to be vibrating

through the air.

The musician stood motionless. There was no colour in his face. His eyes were light yellow, illusive. He was not here with us, he was there where the sounds of his violin had originated.

Lydia Petrovna and I sat spellbound until a flicker of light appeared in the musician's eyes. He became flesh and blood again. His eyes, dark brown, were laughing as he asked us whether we had liked his music.

We applauded.

He was a charming host now. He pointed to a squirrel running across the snow covered ground which shortly landed on the ledge of his window.

"The beggar", he said, "he always comes to share my lunch". It was indeed lunch time and his tray was brought in as we were leaving the room.

"What do you think of Mr. Igor Lvovitchsky?" (that was the musician's name) Lydia Petrovna asked me.

"He is a great musician. What is wrong with him? Why is he here?" I asked.

"We do not know" she replied. "He came to the asylum about 18 months ago and asked to be taken in. He said he was afraid he might be mentally ill. He told us that for him the real world was in his music, in the sounds of his violin, not the world that we all live in. He said "Sometimes my music is violent. I feel what I play, and should there be murder in it, I might become the murderer. I am afraid of this, and would rather be locked up before the act than after it".

"His fear, and the moments of black out after the music" Lydia Petrovna continued "placed him beyond the common limit of normality.

so we accepted him. He is happy here. He plays and composes. He takes long walks outside the asylum with his male nurse. He does not wish to see his old friends or relatives. He is always courteous to the doctors and seems to enjoy our short visits. We try to please him in any way we can. We do appreciate his music and his charm. He is under constant observation. He is rich and pays well for his keep. But is he ill or not? We do not know.

For a few minutes we were silent. Then Lydia Petrovna asked me: "What about having lunch with me at the doctors' cafeteria today?" I thanked her and accepted.

This was the start of our friendship.

I became her permanent companion in her interviews with her patients. She supplied me with information regarding their history and their present condition.

I was an attentive listener and was interested in the subject. Often had our lunch at the doctors' cafeteria. Introducing me to other doctors Lydia Petrovna usually said "This is my friend, Lialia Sharoff from the Institute of Technology. She is interested in abnormal psychology. She never mentioned that I was a patient at the asylum.

About three weeks later Lydia Petrovna asked me to dine with her at her home. She said she would like me to see her little son.

She came for me about 6 p.m. and we went across the asylum grounds to her apartment in the doctors' residence.

Her little boy ran out of the nursery to meet us as we entered the hall. He was about three years old. His movements were quick and sure. His soft black curls had a bluish tint under the light of the lamp. He had a thin, intelligent face, with an eagle's beak nose and closely set black eyes.

He giggled with pleasure as he placed his feet in the third dancing position and reached for my hand to kiss it.

"This is Alexis Vologin the second" Lydia Petrovna introduced him to me.

Alexis was ready for bed when we went in to dinner. He blew us a kiss from the door as he left the room with his nurse.

"He is adorable" I said to Lydia Petrovna.

Her smile was very tender as she said "Yes, I think so".

After dinner, sitting in front of the fire place in the drawing room, Lydia Petrovna told me her story.

"I grew up like you Lialia", she began, "in a small town on the bank of the Volga. I was the only child of a priest. I know about church bells, blue and gold cupolas and the golden crosses gleaming in the sunshine. Like you I went on many trips on the Volga steamers and listened to the songs of the peasants.

I graduated from a Russian Grammar School at seventeen, and enrolled in the medical faculty of a university.

At 25, in 1914, just when the war began, I received my diploma as a surgeon and left for the front.

For a long, long year, I butchered the arms and legs of men who swore at me. There was blood, violence and despair around me. Morale was low.

Then, as in a fairy tale, I met my "prince Charming".

He was not brought into the amputee ward, but to another one where I was substituting for another doctor at the time. He was very lucky. A bullet had passed through his lung about half an inch from his heart, without causing much damage.

Even in delirium he was charming, even then he seemed to be

I liked everything about him from the very first glance. His eagle nose, the large black eyes, the soft black curls, the humorous mouth and the mustache on his upper lip.

A week later he began to recover and immediately charmed all the patients in the ward.

He was full of life and joy. He lived only for the present moment and enjoyed everything, including the war.

He was my patient and I gave him my heart and my soul.

Four weeks later he left the hospital and was given two weeks leave. He took me with him. We were married in a village near by, and spent the two weeks of our honeymoon in the Crimea.

I had never had such a wonderful time in my life before. I loved it all - the blue ocean, the white caps and the hot sun. I enjoyed the grapes, black bread with fresh butter and caviar.

Like Alexis, I lived for the moment only. For two weeks I was in paradise on earth.

Time flew. The two weeks were over and we returned to the front.

Three days later he was killed in action, and I was pregnant. All that was left of Alexis was inside me. It was for me to see that it grew.

I left the front and went back to university to get a diploma as a psychiatrist. I completed my thesis a month before Alexis was born.

Three months later I was appointed to this asylum.

Alexis is all I could have wished for. He is the picture of his father. He has the same gay, irresponsible character. I know I should correct it before it is too late, but I do not have the



heart to do so.

Alexis is my Prince Charming. The soul and essence of my existence".

She stopped, and we sat silently watching the flame in the fire place.



From then on I often dined with Lidia Petrovna and met other asylum doctors in her home.

One day as we were walking to the doctors' restaurant, I said I would like to dine with the other patients of my ward. Her eyebrows contracted and the smile vanished from her face.

"Why do you always have to have such crazy ideas?" she demanded. Then, without waiting for an answer continued "I do my best to keep you out of the ward, but you wish to dine with the patients! Their meals are not a pretty sight. Most of them eat like starved animals. They often grab from each other's bowls and the nurses are on the alert to prevent fights. No, you cannot eat with the patients, it is against asylum rules for ~~patients~~ outsiders to have meals with them.

When she stopped, I asked "What am I doing here, and how long do you intend to keep me?"

She was silent for a few minutes then said "Actually, you can leave whenever you wish. Just give me your word that you will not think of Nirvana for a year". After a second's pause she went on "The question is where will you go? You are not in a condition either physically, or emotionally, to return to the university nor are you fit to lead the life of a student at present. You see Lialia, you have lived too intensely and have worn yourself out. What you need is a good rest. You are not mentally ill. The asylum is not the place for you.

I wrote to your mother a week after you came here saying that you should be removed as soon as possible. I had no answer for over a month. Then a reply came from Japan saying "Send her back to Harbin with a dependable person".

Where can I find a person I can trust with your life? Suppose I do send you back to Harbin, what will you do there alone? It is not the place for you as you have so recently run away from there.

Before the war I would have transferred you to a sanatorium in the Crimea. There you would have basked in the sun and bathed in the blue water of the sea. You would have enjoyed ~~the~~ grapes ~~grown there~~ and black caviar. In a couple of months you would have been as good as new, ready to face and fight life again. However, at present this is impossible."

I interrupted her "Exactly. As I told you at our first meeting at present there is no other place for me to find rest except in Nirvana'".

"What is there so particularly beautiful about Nirvana?" she asked. "You know, just as well as I ~~do~~ that it is all sentimental, romantic nonsense. You would simply be eaten by worms. What is so specially beautiful about that?"

I laughed at her irritation.

"It is not ~~me~~, but only my outer shell that <sup>would</sup> ~~will~~ be eaten by worms. I will not feel it nor ~~would~~ I know about it. Please do not forget that to be eaten by worms is inevitable. Sooner or later everybody has to face it. By escaping into 'Nirvana' I would avoid the asylum. What good will it do anyone if I stay here and lose my mind? The disease is contagious. You know that from medical history

she did not reply and we walked the rest of the way <sup>to the restaurant</sup> in silence. When we had found a secluded table <sup>close to</sup> ~~near~~ a window overlooking the forest she began "Lialia, I know you like my library at home. I could easily replace the sofa with a hospital bed and you can move ~~to~~ there tomorrow if you wish. Just promise ~~me~~ that you will not escape into Nirvana while you are <sup>my guest</sup> a visitor in my house".

"No dico" I replied. "We are ~~in~~ on opposite sides of the fence. You are a <sup>gao</sup> ~~goal~~er and I am the prisoner. At present an attempt to escape <sup>into Nirvana</sup> is not against the law. There is no penalty for it. However

it is a crime to keep a sane person in the asylum. You have repeatedly said, and I quote "Do not think you are mentally ill. Do not say it, you are just as sane as I am."

"You are a doctor and you keep me here. There is nothing I can say or do. The whole medical staff will support you. It is you who has committed a crime."

"I know I can not fight you, so I stay here waiting until you have made up your mind. You are very nice to me. Nevertheless you are still a goaler without the right to be one, and I am a prisoner against my wish."

She sat looking at me silently, then putting her fork on the table and pushing away her plate she said:

"Do you really expect me to let you go to freeze under a pine tree? You should know that I cannot permit it."

We have been so close to each other these four months that I felt you were like a younger sister. I enjoyed your constant companionship and it never occurred to me that I was a goaler."

We left the restaurant and returned to the asylum. She left me in my room without a word.

She left me alone for two days. I knew it was my fault, and I missed her.

I spent most of my time at the window watching the heavy fall of snow. It separated me from the forest like a thick curtain.

When Lidia Petrovna entered my room again she said "Good morning Lialia. I have good news for you. Your father and mother have just returned to Harbin, and your aunt is coming to take you home. She will be here within the next two or three weeks. Would you like to stay with me for this short period?"

I thanked her, but declined the invitation. However I said

I said I would enjoy accompanying her on her interviews with her patients.

I did not consider the impending arrival of my aunt as good news. It merely complicated matters. My original plan of escaping into Nirvana had been so very simple. No commotion or disturbance had been involved. Now it was becoming very complicated. I was so very tired. Conscious of the patients in the ward - just outside the open door of my room, I seldom slept.

Suddenly I realized that to attain Nirvana I would have to act before my aunt came. Morally I could not escape when in her care.

A week passed by. The old routine of my life in the asylum was re-established. I accompanied Lidia Petrovna on her rounds, lunched with her at the doctors' restaurant. Stayed in my room in the afternoons and spent most of the evenings with Lidia Petrovna in her home.

One afternoon I noticed that two of the patients who were due to be discharged some time the following week, had their fur coats on. A nurse also ~~had~~ wore her winter coat. Assuming the patients were leaving the asylum earlier, I came out of my room to bid them farewell and discovered they were going out for a walk.

I asked the nurse whether I could join them. She hesitated, and I began to wheedle:-

"It is a beautiful day, I never go out. The walk would be good for me".

"Yes, I know" she said. "It would be nice for you to be out today, but I am not supposed to take more than two patients at one time. At noon several of our patients became violent and the nurses have taken them to the 'violent ward'. They have not returned as yet, so we are shorthanded". She stopped, hesitated, then continued "It

would be very good for you to get out. The doctor will be pleased. I shall take all of you. These two patients are going home, they are no longer ill, neither are you".

Having made the decision, the nurse gave me a warm hospital coat and a pair of overshoes.

We left the assylum and at my suggestion walked in the direction of the forest. I was very gay and companionable, cheering up the other two patients. The nurse was very pleased with me. I waited until we had passed through the gates of the assylum, then seeing a telegraph post suggested that the other two girls should race me to it, being young, they accepted my challenge and the nurse gave her permission.

The girls started off immediately. As my coat was very heavy I took it off and gave it to the nurse to hold, assuring her that my dress was warm and I would be hot running. Then I set off after the girls. I was an excellent runner and overtook them in no time. I reached the post, threw off my overshoes and increasing speed headed for the woods. I assumed the nurse would take the other patients back to the assylum before she could start the alarm. This would give me a lead.

Due to the deep heavy snow covering the ground, I could not leave the road as it would impede my progress and I would leave clear tracks. I hoped for a heavy fall of snow, but so far there was no sign of one. It was after 3 o'clock. By 5 it would be dark and if I was not caught before this, my escape would be successful.

These thoughts passed through my mind as I ran.

I hoped for a crossroad or a small path I could turn into to confuse my pursuers, but there was none. The road led to a hut. I had to slow down to avoid suspicion.

Stopping to see whether I could circle the hut and avoid passing in front of it, I turned, and saw a horse drawn sleigh. A peasant was driving and the nurse sat beside him. I had no time to think and ran blindly into the snow. It was deep, up to my knees. Before I could make the five yard distance to the nearest bushy tree, the sleigh had reached me and stopped. The nurse got out and called. Between the peasant, the nurse and the hut I knew I did not have a chance, so I turned back and climbed into the sleigh.

The peasant drove us into the yard and we entered the hut. A stout woman greeted us as we entered. He told her to give us some hot tea with dry raspberries to warm us up and explained the situation.

He then told the nurse that he had come from the main junction and that both he and his horse were tired. However, he added that his son had gone out to check traps and upon his return would harness another horse and take us to the asylum.

The three of them sat at the table drinking tea and gossiping. I took my mug and went into a corner of the room where I sat on a bench.

I gathered from their conversation that the nurse had sent the two patients back to the asylum to start an alarm while she ran after me. She would never have caught me without the peasant and his sleigh.

It was dark when the son returned. He had his tea before going to harness the horse, so that it was very late by the time we started back to the asylum.

As I had no coat the man put a heavy army blanket over the hay in the bottom of the sleigh. I lay on it on my back and was covered by a bear skin. The nurse sat beside me.



It was pitch black, not a star in the sky. It began to snow, the heavy flakes fell on my face, melted and ran down my neck. I did not care. I was too tired even for Nirvana. The effort required to get there was too great. The monotonous tinkle of the sleigh bell broke the silence of the woods.

At the asylum I was taken to the infirmary. There I was massaged. A doctor checked my lungs, heart and throat. I was placed in a warm bath. Three hours later I was taken out, massaged again, put to bed and given a bowl of hot broth.

My temperature was taken every three hours all through the night.

Lidia Petrovna came about 1 a.m., looked at my chart, examined my lungs, heart and throat. / <sup>She</sup> Told the nurse to continue taking my temperature and left without saying a single word to me.

I learned later that she had gone in search of me as soon as she heard of my escape, returned after midnight and had immediately gone to the infirmary to see me.

Nobody talked to me. The doctors spoke to the nurses, the nurses spoke to the doctors, but nobody addressed me or asked me anything.

I did not speak either. This last failure to reach Nirvana hit me hard. I was discouraged, disappointed and disgusted with myself. I did not care for anything any more, including Nirvana. I was indifferent to everything.

After breakfast had been served to me in bed, and which I did not touch, Lidia Petrovna came again. Without speaking to me, she took my pulse, looked at the temperature chart and said to the nurse "You can take her in now". Then she left the room.

The nurse slipped a large white nightgown over my head. The

long sleeves hung about a foot below my finger tips. I tried to turn them up but the nurse told me to leave them alone. Those were the first words addressed to me at the infirmary.

A pair of soft slippers was put on my feet.

The nurse took me by one of the long sleeves and led me out. We went through long corridors, through many heavy locked doors finally reaching a small entrance hall. The nurse locked the iron door behind us. Facing was another locked door made of iron bars through which the inside of the room was visible. I had never been in this part of the asylum before.

The nurse unlocked the door and let me in, then the door was closed and locked behind me.

Another nurse, one in the room, took me by the sleeve again and led me across the room to a bed in a corner.

It was a large room with a high ceiling. A row of longitudinal windows were placed directly ~~under~~ under the ceiling and although they were so high up that no one could reach them or look through them, they too were protected by iron bars. Twelve wooden beds were placed lengthwise against the walls and attached to them. Wooden benches also placed along the walls separated every two beds.

There were six nurses and twelve patients in the room, including me.

All the patients had been shaved and all wore the large white nightgowns with extra long sleeves.

Gesticulating with their hands the patients moved back and forth or circled round the room. Some swore, others cursed. They slapped each other with their long sleeves. Some cried, others tried to start a fight. The nurses prevented violence. Apparently

I was now in one of the 'violent' wards.

I lay down and watched the scene in front of me. The nurse on the bench next to my bed kept the other patients away.

I lost all track of time. The meal - a thick stew - was brought in and served in wooden bowls. Wooden spoons were also provided. The nurses passed the bread around.

Most of the patients threw their spoons to the floor. Some tried to hide the food under their mattresses, but the majority grabbed their bowls and went to the walls. They pushed the food deep into their mouths with their fingers, choked and spat it out. Picked it up again and continued pushing it into their mouths.

Those that finished attacked those that still had food. The nurses skillfully prevented fights.

Night descended, the light in the ward was dimmed. The patients were put to bed.

One sat up, clasped her knees in her arms and rocking back and forth began to swear. One after another the rest of the eleven also sat up, knees tightly clasped they too rocked back and forth swearing in chorus until they dropped off to sleep. Some continued all night, others cried. There was no laughter in this ward.

One of the patients was very restless. She would leave her bed, run across the room looking for a door until a nurse followed her and pushed her back. The patient resisted. She cried saying her children were hungry and she had to go and feed them. The nurse beat her with her fist until she dropped to the floor, then kicked her with her heavy thick boot. This scene was repeated again and again all through the night. There was nothing I could do about it. There were six nurses and I was only a patient.

In the morning I asked whether I could see lidia Petrovna.

After a while a nurse took me to the doctor's office.

Lidia Petrovna sat at her desk with her back towards the door. Without turning, she asked: "You wished to talk to me?"

"One of your nurses beat and bruised a patient" I reported. I was startled at the effect of my words. Lidia Petrovna almost fell off her chair in turning towards me.

"Which nurse, which patient?" she demanded.

I described both of them.

She took a writing pad and pen and begged me to describe the previous night's scene in detail.

I did as I had been asked, indicating where the bruises were. She asked me to sign my testimony.

The nurse and the patient were brought into the office. Lidia Petrovna examined the patient and found the bruises I had mentioned. Turning to the nurse she accused her of beating and bruising the patient.

The nurse objected. Pointing to me she said "Doctor, you can not take the word of a violent insane woman against mine".

Lidia Petrovna suddenly pounded her fist on the table.

"Don't you dare repeat these words" she shouted. "He is just as sane as I am. I asked her to stay in your ward for a night because I was suspicious".

"I spy" the nurse snorted at me.

Lidia Petrovna's voice was very cold and sharp as she addressed the nurse.

"You know that the penalty for physical abuse of an irrational patient is ten years in prison. I will see that you get it. You are dismissed from your duties as of this moment. Next week you

will be in court. You are excused now.

When the nurse left, Lidia Petrovna turned to me. "I am very grateful to you for the information". I replied that the pleasure was all mine and asked to be taken back to my bed.

"You are not going back to that ward?" Lidia Petrovna protested. "Be sensible and come and stay with me. There is probably only a week or so left until your aunt arrives".

I said I was tired and wanted to be left alone." This ward is as good as any. I do not want any changes. If you try to move me again I might show you some real violence.

"Well, have it your own way. Do you know you are one of the most difficult patients I have ever had!"

She let the nurse take me back to the ward. I lay on my bed and watched. I felt that I was not present, that I could see myself lying in bed looking at what was going on.

That afternoon I was asked to see the doctor again.

This time Lidia Petrovna met me at the door of her office. "Your friends from the university are here. They would like to see you. They are going home for Easter and want to take you with them.

She stopped for a second as if waiting for my reply, then continued. "Your aunt is not coming. Your father is very ill. He caught influenza on his way home from Japan". She stopped again, looking at me.

Finally she said: "Your father died last week".

I kept still and silent.

As I had mentioned before, there was no special bond of affection between me and my father. He was no more than one of the constant guests at the house. Yet, suddenly, I felt relief

that it was over, that he was not doomed to death any more. It seemed as if a great pressure had been removed and I could breathe easier.

I stood very still.

Lidia Petrovna asked me if she should let the girls come in. I nodded, as unexpectedly tears started to run down my face. These were the tears for Tania, not for my father. The tears that for so long had pressed on my heart and burned my eyes.

For a little while I was left alone in the office. The door was closed, not locked behind me. It was the first time since I entered the asylum that I had been really left alone.

I did not realize it fully, but unconsciously I was aware and grateful. I liked to be alone.

The girls came in and explained that they were all tired and hungry. They had been working very hard, did not go home for Christmas and were very homesick, ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~. Their parents were anxious to see them and as the railway was functioning normally there was no reason for them not to join their families for the Easter celebrations.

They were leaving the following afternoon and thought I might like to return with them. They had all the necessary papers ready for my release.

Lidia Petrovna came in and said that she would bring me down to the junction the next day.

The girls left and Lidia Petrovna told the nurse to take me back to my own room.

This was the beginning of March 1919.

Next morning Lidia Petrovna took me to the junction where four girls and I boarded a train for Manchuria.

This time we had no difficulty getting on board, nor did we encounter any on our trip. After my commitment in November 1918, Admiral Kolchak was declared dictatorial governor of Siberia and then supreme ruler of Russia.

Kolchak's army was very successful in the fall of 1918 and 1919. It had occupied the whole Ural region and was ready to march on Moscow. Although the Trans-Siberian railway remained in the hands of the Czechs, law and order throughout Siberia were established by Admiral Kolchak. Except for severe food shortages, living conditions in Siberia had more or less returned to normal.

On the ninth day after boarding the train at the junction we reached Harbin.

I have not much to say about this period. I spent most of the time on my upper berth watching the familiar scenery of Siberian woods in their winter sleep.

The girls brought me food.

During this trip I realised that my youth had slipped by. I was a mature person standing at another threshold of my life. The life I had tried so hard to escape. I was alone, and the world was pitch black before me.

The family was still living in our New Harbin home at the same tempo as prior to Father's departure. Mother, as usual, was fully occupied with the orphanage and refugee problems which increased daily.

Natasha was in Vladivostock studying the Chinese language.

Serge was in grammar school.

The railway company had been very generous. It was prepared to finance the cost of higher education for Serge, Natasha and me, in any branch of our choice. Funds to cover this were placed in mother's

hands. Mother had also been provided with sufficient funds to live comfortably for the rest of her life. Tania's cottage and the grounds, i.e. our summer residence owned by the company were was deeded to mother for life or for as long as she wished to stay there.

We were allowed to remain in our home in New Harbin for another six months. Frocia and I moved to Old Harbin as soon as warm weather set in.

Mother placed almost all the money she received in the hands of stock jobber. A month later she lost it all and we became peniless. One day Mr. Luboff, father's assistant and close friend, came to see mother. He was temporarily filling father's position until the arrival of a new manager.

During tea Mr. Luboff asked mother if she would like to accept a position with the railway company in his department.

Mother replied that she would not like to work in a place where she had been the first lady. "It would not be a healthy situation" she declared.

"Agreed", Mr. Luboff replied, "but how do you expect to live now that you have lost all your money?"

Mother said that we still had our cows and chickens.

I interrupted "Yes, that is true, but as far as I can remember the cows and chickens were your hobby - a very expensive one, which required a large staff of workmen, veterinarians, breeding specialists and what not".

Mother smiled delightedly. "Yes," she said, " I have supported a barnyard full of cows and chickens for the past twenty years. Don't you think it is time for them to support me instead?"

Next day mother took a shovel and went out to clean the barns with our only remaining servant.



From that day on, whenever she was home mother worked with our Chinaman in the yard, in the garden planting vegetables for our own use and for sale. I never heard her complain that either the work or life was hard.

Actually, she seemed to continue her usual mode of life. She was absorbed in organizing charities. Society continued to respect her, she still had useful contacts. The fire department continued to water our grounds in memory of father.

Father had always requested that she be present at our dinners. Now that she had no obligations she stayed out of the house for two or three weeks at a time returning only to see what was going on, to give new orders to the servant or help him with the work if it was necessary.

In New Harbin mother usually stayed with her old friends, most of whom, at some time or another had lived with us for long or short periods. All of them had enjoyed our dinners, parties, horses and our park. They had used our boxes at the theater and the races. They were glad to see mother and offer her their hospitality.

A week after the conversation with mother Mr. Luboff came again. This time he offered me a draftsman's position paying 200 roubles a month.

I accepted this offer on a temporary basis as I was planning to go to Tomsk in the fall.

Life in Harbin during this period seemed to be very dull to me. The work - no challenge. The drawings consisted of straight lines and squares i.e. city blocks.

My father's memory was still fresh among the members of the department. I was not treated as an employee but as a daughter of the manager. Short and easy assignments were given to me. I had plenty of time to read or

do nothing.

To me this showed my uselessness and depressed me. The problems of human existence, the instinct of self preservation and the fear of death were constantly in my mind.

Our economical condition did not worry me. None of us, including mother, had any concept of money. We never thought about where it came from or how much had been spent. Neither had we acquired a value of things, of luxury or comfort. Thus none of us missed the heavy oak furniture, oriental rugs and carved ivory so lavishly displayed in our home. There was no room for it in Tania's cottage, therefore mother had left it in our former home in New Harbin for the temporary use of Mr. Gandaty who had just arrived to take father's place. Mr. Gandaty was one of the oldest friends of our family. He was delighted to have the house furnished and promised mother to take good care of our furniture.

Frocia and I lived very economically in Old Harbin without any sacrifices, simply because our needs were small.

Frocia cooked our meals and baked the bread. We had our own milk products, chickens and eggs. We used the vegetables from our garden. Mother had one of her hogs butchered and we ate fresh and salt pork every day all summer long.

Natasha had obtained a summer position in the bank in Vladivostok through the student's office at the Institute. She and a friend rented an attic apartment at Okeanskaya for 15 roubles a month. They spent the week ends beside the ocean, but kept on their student rooms in town. She asked me if I would like to share the attic with them. By the middle of August I decided to do so.

I planned to leave for Tomsk on September 1st, and having worked from April 1st, had saved 700 roubles - a sum sufficient to carry me through the school year at Tomsk. We were still using our railway passes.

Natasha's attic consisted of one large airy room with sloping ceiling. Four army cots stood in the window alcoves. There was an ice box, an oil burner for ~~xxx~~ cooking, a large wooden table and four chairs.

The house was located in a small village, about two blocks from the beach and about a mile from the residential section where mother's friends lived.

Natasha came down with a group of friends on Saturday afternoons and left on Sunday nights. The rest of the time I was alone. I did not renew my acquaintance with old friends in the residential section, and lived like a hermit. I spent my time walking on the beach, sat watching the sun set by the hour, the changing colours and the rising of the moon.

It was during this period that I came to the conclusion that life acquired meaning when one had a goal. A goal, which in itself was greater and more valuable than life. That the significance of this goal and its achievement gives meaning to our existence.

According to Buddha life is directed towards an otherward goal for which human intellectual knowledge and perfection of intelligence are necessary.

Aristotle and Plato identified virtue with intelligence. According to them, only a mature mind could judge.

According to Jesus, forgiveness, self humiliation and love are the essence of life.

To me, forgiveness could be achieved only through understanding.

I realised my ignorance, lack of information and knowledge. It seemed to me that my first goal should be self development and the acquisition of a mature mind. I decided that the first requirement was a profound understanding of the laws of Nature. I intended to achieve this through the study of science - a study of the material world we

could comprehend. I also intended to study the human mind as the receiver (perceptor) of this world, philosophy as a constructive criticism of science and as a record of the progress of the Old Masters who had striven towards the same goal as mine.

This was my aim for the present. I was ready to search for the unknown and leave for Tomsk.

In Tomsk I plunged into study.

A severe typhus epidemic spread through the town in October. Medical students were drafted by the city government to fight the disease. Rumours were current that the schools in Tomsk would be closed before the end of the year.

On November 15th 1919 Omsk was occupied by the Red Army.

The Omsk government ~~retreated~~ withdrew to Irkutsk. Kolchak's Army was retreating towards the East. The evacuation of Tomsk was announced, only medical students were asked to remain to combat the epidemic.

People carrying bundles of belongings set off for the railway junction by local trains, by horse and on foot, leaving their homes behind them. Panic swept through the town.

At the junction a continuous line of trains was moving towards the East. The White Army was retreating. The Allies were leaving Russia through Vladivostok, refugees were escaping from Russia, from the Ural region and from the western part of Siberia.

A freight car for <sup>Manchurian</sup> students was once again attached to one of the Allied military trains. As usual we were very crowded. Rations were poor but we had plenty of cigarettes. It was bitterly cold and the smoke from the iron stove stung our eyes.

We had travelled like this several times in the past two years, but this time it was worse than ever. This time we were forced to leave. The

"Reds" were at our heels. There was no hope of returning.

Due to heavy snowfalls, the number of trains and disorder throughout the counties, we moved very slowly and did not reach Harbin until the end of December.

On January 4th 1920 Admiral Kolchak surrendered at Irkutsk. Soon after that he was executed by the Communists. The Red Army occupied Irkutsk and the Soviet Government was in control of all Siberian territory west of Lake Baikal, while Ataman Semenov, supported by the Japanese, still operated against the communists in Siberian territory east of Lake Baikal.

The Far Eastern portion of Siberia declared its independence and named Chita as the capital of the new Far East Republic.

The White Army retreated to Manchuria and Harbin, which was already overcrowded, became more so.

White Army officers were quartered in a camp on the outskirts of the town. They had no money, food, medical supplies or fuel. Many of them were wounded. The temperature outside was 25 C. below zero. Cold Manchurian winds swept through the town, yet more refugee trains arrived daily bringing thousands of homeless, starved and sick people. They had no place to go and so sat for days on the railway tracks. Mother spent most of her time down there also, interviewing civilian refugees, trying to place them and find accommodation for them.

Harbin society continued its gay life. "Women and Wine" was still its motto. Wine still poured over Harbin.

Frocia and I were living in Tania's hut. Serge left school and joined Semenov's Army. Natasha was in Vladivostok.

For a couple of months after my return to Harbin, I felt entirely lost. I was once again at a cross road, and every road looked hopeless. There was no hope that the anti-Bolshevik forces could ~~re-occupy~~ regain control of the country.

During this period I went to visit Natasha. Vladivostok was occupied by the Japanese. The Allies, including the Czechs were ready to leave. Most of the young girls were sorry to see their boy-friends leave, while the older generation was both glad and frightened. I remained for about three weeks and then returned home to Manchuria.

In Harbin a group of students had organized a club whose purpose was to obtain information regarding continuing our education.

The first problem was to locate <sup>suitable</sup> institutions. The second - to obtain information regarding minimum living costs and transportation. Most of the students favoured the University of California, Berkley U. S. A.

According to our information, many American students worked their way through school. Tuition fees were relatively low, however, transportation was expensive. The minimum sum required to enter the United States was \$100.- and immigration papers were difficult to obtain.

The university in Calcutta, India attracted me because of Indian philosophy and religion, but it was costly.

Everywhere we turned, dollars, not roubles, were required. The Russian rouble was worthless by that time. Most of the Russian population in Manchuria had lost their savings. The Chinese dollar was now circulating.

Employees of the railway company, those who were involved in commercial or stock speculations or money changing prospered, the rest starved.

Students who had no money finally decided that Russia was the only place where they could get an education, I was one of them. We separated

from the original club and formed another group. Our aim was to find a way of getting an education in Russia and obtain permission from the Soviet government to enrol in Russian universities.

By this time the Soviet government was established in central Russia, throughout Siberia and most of the south. On May 14th 1920 the Soviets recognized the Far East republic. Civil war was over except in the Crimean peninsula and the border of Poland.

According to our latest information, universities were functioning. There were no tuition fees. Any classified student could enter and no money was necessary. No money was permitted to be used in Russia. Students were considered to be employed by the government and received food, clothing and lodging.

Russian universities had been first class. The standards were high and the staffs consisted of old professors. We could not expect better leaders in education, moreover there was no language problem which we would have to face in any other country.

These were the advantages. However, we had other information as well. The rations were poor and lodgings bad. Terror of persecution was spreading throughout the country. There was Lenin's declaration:

"We are not waging war against separate individuals. We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class!"

There was the Cheka - the extraordinary commission for the suppression of counter-revolution.

Reliable information concerning Russia was difficult to obtain. It was so contradictory and evasive.

Time was passing, it was now the beginning of August 1920.

Students wanted to get their education, they were ready to enter Russian universities, but they were afraid.

I decided there was no point in beating around the bush any longer. If we intended to enter a university this year, now was the time to act. Therefore, I suggested that we should send delegates to Chita - the capital of the Far East Republic to obtain more direct information and permits for Manchurian students to enter Russian universities.

The reply to my suggestion was: "Go ahead and be our delegate!" Three men volunteered to come with me.

David Vanberg - a refugee from Russia had no home and no work. He said he had nothing to lose, and had an uncle in Irkutsk.

Eugene Volkovez - a student from the Kazan university - was also a refugee from Russia. He had no home and no work in Harbin either.

Peter Andreev had just completed grammar school. He had been born in Harbin, wanted to become a doctor and intended to enter the university in Tomsk.

The four of us were ready to travel to the Far East Republic as soon as possible.

We had some difficulty in obtaining permission to cross the Manchurian border and enter the republic, however using the influence of relatives and friends, we overcame this obstacle and in the beginning of September 1920 left for Chita.

I took a light suitcase with three changes of underwear, three pairs of stockings, one suit, two dresses, two sheets and two pillow cases. Another two sheets and two pillow cases were rolled up with my woollen blankets in a canvas bag.

Mother gave me two five-roubles gold coins for emergency use, which Frocia covered in black velvet and stitched to the back of my gold baptismal cross which I wore around the neck.

I was dressed in a suit and carried my winter coat over my arm. I



also took my father's karakul cap which I had always admired. I am mentioning it here because it played a significant role in my adventure.

We reached Chita on September 10th. I had passed through it many times previously, but had never been beyond the railway station.

This time, leaving the station I saw tall, green, bushy pines growing in red clay. The sun shone brightly, the air was fresh and clean and the town looked gay. So this was the gateway to our education. My spirits soared.

On our way to the Ministry of Education, we passed the market. It was a long time since I had seen one. Peasant women in brightly coloured kerchiefs advertised their products. We had silver change on us and so stopped at a stall for breakfast. I had a mug of hot tea and a hot pie stuffed with mushrooms and onions.

In the Department of Education we stated our cause and asked to see the man in charge. We were told he was out of town and were advised to return in a week. In the meantime we were assigned to a "Youth's Dormitory" and were given ration cards for our three meals at the community dining room.

So far, so good!.

We were in high fettle. The town was charming, the pines whispered. The food was poor, but we still had some loose silver.

When we returned a week later, the department chief was expecting us and we were admitted without delay.

He was a tall man about 55 years old. His face was thin and intelligent. He had gray hair and dark penetrating eyes.

"Come and sit down" he said as the girl opened the door to his office. "I have heard about you and have been expecting you" he continued. "Now please tell me exactly why you have come to Chita".

His voice was very cultured.

We explained the conditions in Manchuria to him, and our desire for an education.

He listened attentively without interrupting.

When we stopped talking he remained silent for a few minutes. Looking at us with his penetrating eyes he made us feel small - like children. He lighted a cigarette, then said:-

"You are very young and eager. I am old and experienced. You are my responsibility. You do not realize where you wish to go. There is mismanagement and disorder. Russia is destroyed at present. There is starvation and typhus epidemics throughout the country. There is fear - the people fear the government, the government fears the people".

I can not afford to let you go. Too many young people have been lost during the long years of war and revolution. We need a young generation for the future of Russia. Go back to Manchuria. This is the best advice I can give you".

We began to object. This time he interrupted us by saying:-

"There is nothing else I can tell you now. Think about it. Come back in a week. Please write to the other students telling them not to come. I would not let anyone pass through."

The interview was over. We returned to the dormitory feeling very despondent.

It was a long week. We wandered along the streets, listened to rumours and talked to people.

We learned that the government of the Far East Republic protesting the presence of Japanese troops had asked for assistance from Soviet Russia and that Soviet troops were expected to enter the town any time now.

Information about conditions in Russia was the same as in Harbin - contradictory and evasive.

reasoned

I ~~considered~~ that as the universities were functioning there were students. If they could live and go to university, so could I. Life in Chita appeared to be normal. Chita was the capital of the Far East Republic, which in turn, was a part of Russia. The head of the Department of Education was a very cultured man. There was no reason for us to return to Manchuria. I also doubted whether we could get back even if we wanted to.

The week finally passed and we went to the Educational department again. This time we were not admitted to see the head, instead we were asked to write down our reason for coming to Chita and to fill application forms for entry permits into Soviet Russia. We were told to come back in ten days time.

It was the last part of September. Seasonal rains had begun. We had spent our silver change and only had our rations. Everybody else was occupied, we were the only ones with nothing to do. Time dragged slowly. Finally the ten days passed and we went to the Department of Education again.

This time we were admitted to the departmental head.

"I have not forgotten you" he began as we entered the room. "I purposely delayed meeting you. I had hoped to send you back to Manchuria, and I regret to admit that I have failed to find any legal way of doing so. I will therefore issue you with commissions to go to Tomsk to complete your education, provided you write the following letter to the rest of your group".

He gave a pen and a sheet of paper to David, then began to dictate:-

"Dear friends, at present conditions for education in Russia are unfavourable. DO NOT COME. The Head of the Department of Education

has stated that he will not allow any of the students to leave Chita for educational purposes".

We all signed the letter which was placed in envelope which we addressed and which the department head placed with his outgoing mail.

He told us that our papers would be ready in two weeks and that we could obtain them at the office. He wished us a happy journey and good luck.

In the middle of November we boarded the train for Irkutsk.

The temperature was 25 C below zero. Snow was beginning to cover the ground. There were no passenger trains so that we were obliged to travel by freight. The car was crowded as trains ran only once a week.

This was no group of students travelling together. Whereas a group of students knew each other and had fundamentally the same education, habits and interests, this was a heterogeneous crowd - soldiers, peasants, merchants etc. All of them were tired, hungry and on edge.

Rations were poor. A small piece of bread and tea. Sometimes we got buckwheat gruel in the evening.

There were no student songs to shorten the time. Heavy snow falls and mismanagement delayed our progress. It was the middle of December before we reached our destination.

As the train pulled in, the station came to life, but there was no life in the faces of the people - not even excitement, only despair.

The sun shon brightly, deep white snow covered the ground and the temperature was 40 C. below zero.

I found out that the train for Tomsk had just left, that it ran only once a week and that due to heavy snow falls a delay from ten days to two weeks could be expected.

I also found out that we should register and have our passes checked at the Komissariat Office.

David was impatient to see his uncle. He was sure that we could all stay with the family.

We left the station. As there were no hackneys for hire nor any other means of transportation, we walked. The roads and sidewalks were unswept. On our way we met only a few soldiers. We also saw a few civilians at a distance who would quickly turn a corner or cross the street on seing us. Most of the streets were deserted and most of the windows shuttered. The houses appeared dark and forbidding. Irkutsk looked like a ghost town. Only the smoke from the chimneys showed that the houses were inhabited.

The sun continued to shine brightly, the snow glittered and hurt one's eyes.

David stopped at a large house, the shutters were closed but a chimney was smoking. He rang the bell but there was no answer. He rang and rang again. Then he began to pound on the door.

We heard steps, the door opened slightly and we saw a pair of dark, frightened eyes. We were let in and the door was quickly shut behind us.

The man embraced David, who introduced us to his uncle Jacob Vanberg

Leading us into the front room Mr. Vanberg called out "Rose, children, you can come up now. It is our nephew David and his friends".



As we entered a frightened woman and two young people came into the front room from the opposite end.

"We are always frightened now when the door bell rings - it could be the Cheka or bandits, who knows!" Jacob Vanberg explained, as David was embraced by the woman and youth.

"This is my wife Rose and my two children - Ruth and Albert" Mr. Vanberg introduced his family to us.

He turned to his wife saying "Rose, I think the young people are hungry, let us feed our guests". Rose replied that the samovar would be ready in twenty minutes and suggested that we move closer to the large fire burning in the fireplace.

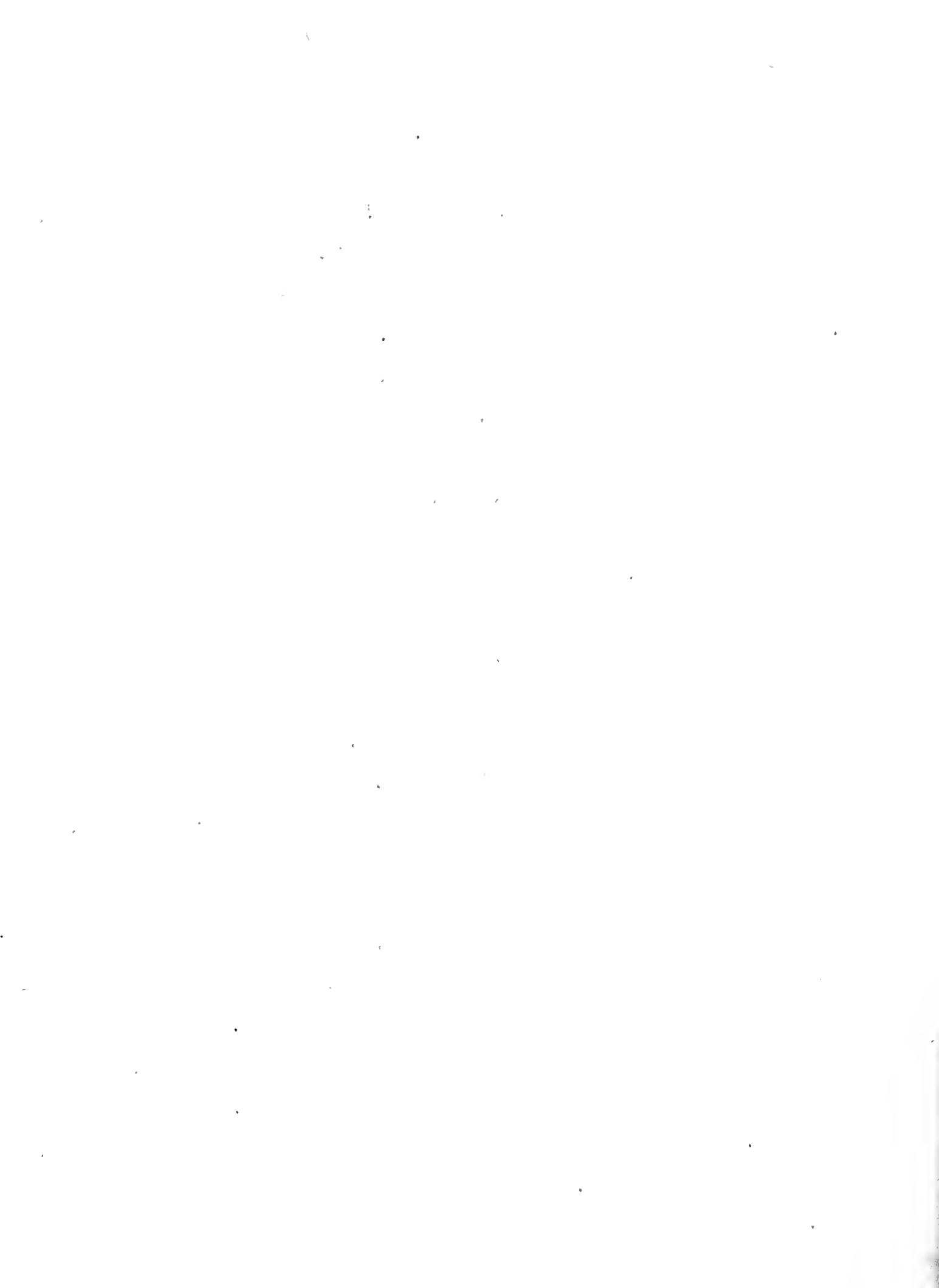
As we relaxed, Jacob Vanberg asked us where we had come from and where we were going.

He shook his grey head as we completed our explanation:-

"Crazy kids" he commented. "Do you know that since the Soviet Army entered Irkutsk I have kept my son and daughter prisoners in their own home? I have forbidden them to go out."

"Ruth is 19 years old and Albert 21. They are our pride and joy. We live and work for them" He stopped and looked at his children.

"Do you know," he continued "That as soon as the Soviet Army entered Irkutsk they opened the gates of the prison? ~~and~~ The Soviet Government has let all the prisoners out. I do not mean the political ones. There were always free to come and go, but the real criminals - the murderers and bandits were let loose in the town. The political prisoners left for Moscow immediately - the political center, but the criminals joined the Communist party here in Irkutsk. They are now the government. People are continuously robbed and killed in the town. There is no law or order. No one goes out unless it is necessary to get food".





"In the old days Rose and I dressed up when we went out - our best fur coats and hats, shiny shoes. Well, we still dress up to go out, but now we wear ragged coats, Rose ties a dirty dark herchief on her head and carries a can, I carry one too. We both pretend to be poor and very old. It is safer that way. Yes, we go out in rags while our good clothes are stored in trunks".

Rose interrupted him by calling us to lunch.

The table was nicely set. There were chicken sandwiches, curd cheese, bread, butter and jam.

We were surprised at the food.

Albert said: "Father gets the food on the black market or in the villages".

"I am a merchant" Mr. Vanberg began to talk again.

"I go to the neighboring villages about once every two weeks. I bring them sugar, salt, dry goods and hardware ~~and~~ in exchange for chicken, geese ducks etc. I also get frozen milk, cream butter and curd cheese. I keep what I need and ~~take~~ the rest to the black market. I find out what the peasants need and bring it on my next visit. I do the same on the black market. In this manner I keep up my trade and we do not go hungry. We have plenty of food."

"I am a self made man, I have had no education. I am a Jew. I began selling pine cones at the railway station when I was seven. I sold stones and souvenirs at the peasants market when I was nine. That is how I started. I opened a store when I was twenty. My parents died when I was fifteen and I have been on my own since. I met Rose, her father was a merchant too and took me in as a partner. Rose was his only child. Her mother had died long ago.

When her father died we inherited everything. Upon that foundation I built my empire. I had a furniture stor<sup>e</sup>, a fur store

and a jewelry store. I worked long hours. I counted the money, but never the hours I spent. I had all that a man could wish for, money, a nice home, and a wife and children whom I love. I planned a great future for all of them. Now my children are prisoners in their own home.

When the Bolsheviks came I furnished their houses with my best furniture. I even gave them my own mahogany suite from our home. I supplied them with furs and oriental rugs. They would not accept me into the party. I am a bourgeois! Not that I agree with the communists but I would do anything to save my family.

I gave them my furniture and replaced it with this trash. It is not really bad, but it is a cheap quality. The family is used to good things.

The grand piano is the only thing that remained in the front room. I gave it to Ruth on her sixteenth birthday as she is a very good musician. It is so large, it is difficult to move it out. Most of the Komissars have no taste for good music, so it stays, but she cannot play it - it might attract attention from<sup>m</sup> the outside.

When the Communists came I opened up my wine cellar for them. I gave them all my wine before they had the opportunity of confiscating it. They are still searching my home.

We used to live gaily. Young people, the friends of Ruth and Albert were always in the house. Rose fed them well. They danced and sang. Rose's friends and mine also came. We played cards, drank tea, chatted and gossiped. Now, no body ever comes. We do not let anyone in. We are afraid of our friends and they of us.

All of you, stay with us as long as you like. We have plenty of food for all. It is nice to have someone from outside and it will be company for Ruth and Albert. They have not seen anyone for almost

a year. Stay until after Christmas anyway. It is less than two weeks.

My three companions decided to stay with the Venbergs for the Christmas holiday. I agreed with them. We were tired and hungry after our long drawn out journey.

However, I asked Mr. Vanberg where and when we should have our passes checked. He answered:

"Let me do it. I will go and see the Komissar some time this week. I am planning to go to the villages to get food for the Christmas holidays and shall tell the Kommissar that I am planning to set some traps in the woods and if I get a hare I shall bring it to him. Then he will know that I am out of town and if I get caught I can say that I am bringing the food for the Komissar. I feed him well and so we are friends."

"Furthermore Rose and I are planning to go to the black market before I leave for the villages and the Comissar might give me a hint when the market will be raided so that we can be sure to remain at home that day."

"I'll take your passes with me and get your food ration cards. The ration is poor but it will help. One can get bread or flour and these are hard to come by otherwise. If people tried to live only on the ration they would starve to death."

"One has to be a criminal to live with criminals. My trade is a criminal one now, but I keep my family well fed. This is the best I can do for them."

"So," he concluded "I will check your passes in a few days time".

I thanked him but suggested I could do it myself as he had so many other matters to attend to".

He shook his head and said: "You still do not realize the

danger in leaving the house and meeting the Comissar. Why you might be in prison before you know it".

"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you. Every night, when darkness settles over the town, a horse drawn sleigh comes along the street with three men in it. The one in front is the coachman, the two men in the back each hold a coiled rope in their left hand and in their right each holds the looped end of the rope swinging slightly ready to throw over the neck of any pedestrian who happens to be out. When the loop reaches it's destination, the horse increases speed dragging the victim behind the sleigh along the street".

"These are the night riders. In the morning a number of frozen naked bodies are found. Their clothes can be purchased on the black market."

That night Mr. Vanberg called me to a shuttered window. The moon shone brightly as I peered through a crack and saw the riders he had described. I could discern the cruel sardonic expressions on their faces. One sleigh passed and another appeared from the other end of the street. The night riders were cruising through the town, and Mr. Vanberg whispered in my ear:

"If you look through this crack in the morning when the sun goes up, you will see a large sleigh with a black canvas cover. Three men walk beside it. The first leads the horses while the other two collect the frozen bodies of the dead. There are many corpses in the streets in the morning. People who were killed through the night, those who died of typhus or starvation and those who killed themselves in fear, despair, or for some other reason. "

"We don't have funerals or church services any more. The churches are closed, the priests are in prison. We put our dead out into the streets during the night to be picked up by the sleigh in the morning.

I peered through the crack at sunrise, there was the black covered sleigh.

A few days later Mr. Vanber left on his trip. We watched him go. It was still dark, the street was deserted as he left the drive in his shabby sleigh pulled by a hack.

He left, and gloom settled over the house. We all had the same thought "Will he come back?".

To our joy he returned two days later bringing food for the Christmas festivities. For the family he brought a hare, two geese, four ducks, six chickens, butter, frozen cream and milk, 25 lbs. of buckwheat grain and 50 lbs. of potatoes. He brought a hare for the Commissar and plenty of food for the black market. He left these supplies in the sleigh, so that should there be a search or a raid on the house, he could say he was just about to take the food to the Commissar.

Our life in the house was normal. Rose was a good cook and fed us well. We played cards, chess and checkers; discussed poetry and literature. We were not allowed to discuss politics or the present government. Mr. Vanberg thought it would be safer that way.

Mr. Vanberg got some old, dirty coats for the men and let them visit the black market. He also got an old coat for me. Rose tied a dark kerchief on my head and Mr. Vanberg said I could follow them at a distance to the black market. "If somebody steps on your toes" he told me, "just take your foot away and move. Do not say anything."

Time passed. The Christmas holidays were over and the boys decided to stay with the Vanbergs over the New Year.

I went to the station and found out that a train for Tomsk was expected to leave between January 5th and 7th.

We learned that the Vanbergs planned to leave for Chita at the

earliest opportunity. Mr. Vanberg was determined that his children should be educated in the United States. He said he had hidden gold and jewels from his store which would be more than enough to get them out of the country and pay for Ruth and Albert's schooling. He planned to reach Chita early in spring so that they could cross the Manchurian border on foot, if necessary, during the summer.

On January 4th 1921 my four companions told me that they had seen more than enough of Russia and had decided to remain with the Vanbergs for the time being, leaving for Chita at the first opportunity. I felt differently, I believed Irkutsk was exceptionally bad because of the criminal background, for it had originally been settled by criminals let out of prison for good behaviour. They had not been permitted to leave the area of Irkutsk and so had built a village on the site. The village grew into a town, as the years went by more and more prisoners were let out. During the revolution criminals had seized power in the town and unleashed their bestial instincts. We should not judge the whole of Russia, particularly the universities, by what we saw in Irkutsk.

It also occurred to me that it would be very difficult to get new passes to Chita from Irkutsk. We had no valid reason for asking for them particularly as our original passes were for Tomsk and we had no right to stay in Irkutsk. I thought it was madness to remain any longer. University was my destination, I would leave by the first available train.

On the morning of January 7th Mr. Vanberg took me to the station in his shabby sleigh. He bought me three pounds of salami from the black market and Rose baked dry biscuits as provisions for the trip. She tied a dark wool kerchief over my head, covering my cap completely. It is warmer and much safer that way, she said.

Mr. Vanberg let me out at the station and I entered the waiting room from the platform side because the room was so crowded that I knew it would be impossible to cross it. Experience had taught me that if I wanted to board the train I would have to be one of the first out on the platform and so must stay close to the door. The temperature outside was <sup>0</sup>-45 C.

A small coil oil stove burned in the center of the room. The air was heavy. People were sleeping all over the floor. Some had been waiting here for two weeks. There was no conversation, only the snores and moans of the sleeping could be heard. I found a place for my luggage and sat on it.

According to Mr. Vanberg's information the train was due between eight and ten a.m. It was seven a.m. and still dark outside.

A little boy about seven years old caused a disturbance. He tried to waken his mother. Crying he shook her by the shoulder saying between sobs that he was hungry.

An old man next to her decided to help the boy. He touched the woman, looked at her more closely and quickly removed his hand. "She is dead" he declared.

"Dead" echoed through the room".

"That is why the air is so heavy" somebody said and some one else called the guard. Red soldiers stepped into the room. They took the woman by her shoulders and legs and started to make their way across the room. The little boy, crying "Mama, mama!" tried to follow them. Just at that moment a loud whistle announced the approach of the train. The crowd moved towards the platform sweeping the boy away from the guards and his mother.

I can still hear the voice of the little boy calling for his mother. See the little freckled face filled with terror and the blue

eyes filled with tears.

I boarded one of the freight cars. The stove smoked, it was very crowded. This time I was alone in a strange, unfamiliar crowd. I thought I knew the Russian people, the Russian villages.

I remembered picking mushrooms in the woods with the peasant children, stories the village grandfathers used to tell, the music and the dancing. I pictured my first year in Tomsk - the students skiing to a neighbouring village on Sunday. I could see the interior of a peasant hut, the icons in the right corner ~~xxxxxxxx~~, the boiling samovar on the table, I felt the warmth of the room. The smell of hot borsch wafted across from the oven of the Russian brick stove. I could see the peasant drinking tea, discussing politics and crops.

They used to be open and friendly people who liked a social gathering music and song. They had no education but they had their opinions which they expressed without fear. They had landlords to whom they paid taxes, now they were free of them. However now they had nothing, no homes, no food. Fear and starvation paralyzed their thoughts and their actions.

Most of the passengers were refugees from central Russia. Now they were returning to their broken nests, hoping to find scattered relatives and friends, hoping above all to die and be buried in the native fields of their beloved Russia.

It was bitterly cold. The doors of the car were shut. The acrid smoke from the stove made ones eyes smart, irritated the throat and penetrated into the lungs.

In the evening, when darkness descended over the land we received our ration - a piece of black bread about half an inch thick, four by three inches square. I took out my salami and fifty-nine pairs of



hungry, ~~my~~ hostile, envious eyes turned on me. I cut the salami into sixty slices and gave a piece to everyone. It was all gone that first evening.

Thus my journey to Tomsk began.

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There is not much that I can say about this part of my long journey.

When grandmother and I had travelled on the Great Trans-Siberian Railway for the first time, it had taken us about a week to reach Irkutsk from Tomsk. Later, the journey was reduced to about three days. Even in the heaviest snow falls the train was never more than three hours late.

Now the time of arrival was indefinite. Due to mismanagement the tracks were never cleared of snowfall or <sup>snow</sup> slides on time. Lack of fuel, breaks along the line or in the engine itself, added to the delays. Sometimes the train remained for hours, even days, at some small unidentified station in the middle of nowhere.

Rations were poor consisting mainly of a mug of tea and a small piece of black bread. Once in a while we received a bit of smoked herring or a cold boiled potato. Very occasionally a little buckwheat gruel.

There were no more peasant markets or station restaurants.

Due to the bitter cold, the door of our car remained shut and it was dark inside. Because of the darkness, cold and hunger I slept most of there time. There was nothing else to do.

My heart pounded loudly when in the middle of February I finally boarded the familiar local train from the Junction to Tomsk.

As usual, the Siberian forest stood silent in it's enchanted winter sleep. It's magic beauty still untouched by civilization, war or revolution.

As usual, I went to see Professor Petroff and his family directly from the train. On my way I faced the same deserted streets as in Irkutsk. Passing the University and Institute I noticed there was none of the usual commotion created by students entering or leaving. There were no groups discussing philosophy or religion.

As usual, Mrs. Petroff was glad to see me. However she was sorry she had no room for me this time. She said:-

"The apartment is not our's any longer. We have only two bed rooms. One is for the professor and me, the other is occupied by my daughter Zina and her nurse Ann. You remember Ann don't you? She is one of the family. She came to us when Zina was two weeks old. Now Zina is eight."

"A red soldier occupies Ann's room. The Commissar and his family use your room and the drawing room. We share the kitchen and dining rooms".

"I am so glad that Ann is still with us. She prepares our meals and is friendly with the Commissar's wife. They do nicely in the kitchen together".

"We are very fortunate also that Ann has a brother living in the village <sup>who has</sup> ~~with~~ a large family. I used to give him the clothes Zina outgrew. Now he exchanges food products for our old clothes. Just yesterday he brought us a few heads of cabbage in exchange for Zina's coat."

"We will have boiled cabbage and potatoes for our lunch today. Would you like to stay with us for the meal? The professor will enjoy seeing you. He is working in his laboratory at present. Thank goodness he still has that".

I was glad to accept her invitation.

"We eat at noon sharp" she said. "The dining room is at our disposal from noon to one. The Commissar and his family use it between

1 p.m. and 2 p.m. The soldier usually eats with them".

I learned from her that all the schools in Tomsk were closed because of an epidemic of typhus. However she told me that I would probably find the Dean of my department at his office. She thought the best time to see him would be before noon.

I left my suitcase and went to see the Dean.

I remembered him from my first visit to the Institute - a tall husky man of about fifty. He had dark hair and mustache and had always laughed with us and teased. He was brimful of enthusiasm about the future. The doors of his office were always open to students who wished to see him. He encouraged us and pushed us on. The whole student body looked on him as a friend, leader and advisor.

I hardly recognized him. He had lost weight, his eyes were lack-lustre and his cheeks hollow. It was but a year since I had seen him.

He greeted me courteously but without enthusiasm or jokes. He listened to me patiently but without showing his usual interest.

When I had finished he said:-

"Why did you have to come! The town is dying from starvation and typhus. The epidemic is at its peak. We have closed all the schools and have sent all the students back to their homes to relieve the town of some of the population. We mobilized only those medical students who were natives of Tomsk to fight the typhus. True we have also had to use the medical students from Manchuria because they had been mobilized before the town was occupied by the ~~Soviet~~ Communists. Now that the Manchurian border is closed we are unable to send them back. We do not have enough food to keep the population of Tomsk alive for a year. Every piece of bread is counted. Now I need another ration card another mouth to feed."

"What will you do here? Just sit around and wait for death, as the rest of us? With present mismanagement there is no delivery of

food to the town. You should have known that as Tomsk is thirty miles from the main railway food deliveries are difficult. Peasants no longer bring their products for sale, it is prohibited by law. Money is worthless".

"What shall I do with you?"

He stopped talking and looked at me sad and depressed.

"If the Institute is not open", I began, "I certainly have nothing to do in Tomsk. I do not want to stay here. Neither do I want to take bread from starving people. I realize I can not go back to Manchuria, but do I have to stay in Tomsk? Can I not go somewhere else - Moscow for example? It seems to me that Moscow, the present capital of Russia which has been occupied by the communists for the past three years should be better organized than Siberia."

A little smile touched his lips as he said:

"You are still alive, still have hope and enthusiasm. I wish I had it too, but I have lost it like many others. I wish I could help you, encourage you as I used to do, but I can not.

"Could you give me a pass to go to Moscow?" I asked.

"How can I?" he replied. "There are certain regulations I have to follow. You have just arrived".

We both sat silent for a few minutes. Then he said:

"If you were to have a relative in Moscow who was ill and needed your help I could let you go and visit him. You do not have anyone in Moscow who is ill, do you?"

I took up his cue and replied:

"Why yes, my father is dying in Moscow".

"Oh in that case," he <sup>said</sup> ~~replied~~ "I can give you leave of absence for two weeks to go to Moscow. If during that period you succeed in getting attached to a university or any other organisation there, you may

remain. However you must stay here for two weeks before you can obtain the leave of absence."

I told him that I would be glad to wait.

"Do you think your father will still be alive at that time?" he asked.

I assured him that my father would be gravely ill but still waiting for my return".

He gave me a little smile which brought back a memory of the man he used to be.

He called the housing bureau and asked them to place me temporarily with the Manchurian students. He gave an order for my ration card and told me that he would see me in two weeks when my Moscow pass would be ready.

The interview was over.

I went to have lunch with the Petroffs.

During lunch I learned from the professor that Tomsk's main problems were the typhus epidemic and a shortage of food, fuel and soap.

There had been no crimes in the streets, people were absent because of exhaustion from lack of food and the cold. The outside temperature was -45 C.

According to the professor, when the communists occupied the town they confiscated the houses, however only the large mansions were taken over completely. Most of the families in average size homes were permitted to occupy a part of their home while the other part was usually assigned to Red soldiers, communists or other families whose homes had been confiscated. Currently each house contained two or three families who shared the kitchen and the dining room.

At the beginning of the occupation each house was searched, gold, silver, furs and many other valuables were confiscated. "But that was not all", said Professor Petroff, "The worst part was the confiscation

of home made preserves stored for winter use. Thus barrels of salted herrings, sauerkraut, pickled and dried mushrooms, an infinite number of jars of pickled vegetables, berries and fruit were taken away. Sacks of potatoes, carrots, turnips etc. stored in cellars were declared communist property and taken away."

"In exchange we received ration cards with which we can get some potatoes, occasionally flour and perhaps a salt herring once a month. Even tea is limited. The ration is so small that it is not sufficient to keep one alive. The food queues are so long that it sometimes takes a whole day to receive one's ration, and sometimes when the queue is still long the doors of the distribution center close unexpectedly because there is no more food left."

"People are dying like flies from typhus and starvation. There is no medicine nor soap. We can not observe the simplest rules of hygiene".

"Families are supposed to place their dead on the streets at night to be collected in the morning by sleighs covered with black canvass. We have no more funerals. Churches are closed. Most of the priests are in prison".

He stopped talking and sat silently looking at his plate of boiled cabbage and potatoes. Then mechanically he started to eat.

Mrs. Petroff ~~interrupted~~ broke the silence by asking me about my plans. When I replied that I would be leaving for Moscow in two weeks, she shook her head and declared that it was madness to go tramping over the country at this time.

The professor disagreed. He thought it was the best thing I could do.

"Go as soon as possible" he told me, "while you still have the energy and spirit of adventure. Moscow should be better organized than Tomsk".

"I have a brother in Moscow" he continued. "He is an engineer and

at present occupies an important post. He and his family live in the country, but because of his position he also has an apartment in town. I am sure that you can stay with him until you have time to look around. I will give you a letter asking my brother to help you in your adjustment to Moscow".

I was delighted because everything seemed to be shaping up so nicely for me.

The hour was over and Ann began to hurry us to leave the dining room so that she could clear the table for the commissar.

I said goodbye to my friends and went to the commissariat for my ration card and the assignment of lodgings. Thanks to the Dean I was assigned to stay with the students from Manchuria. They were not from my original group but I knew them all well. They lived on the outskirts of the town in a two story house. The first floor was occupied by ten men. Five girls lived in the upper flat, consisting of two rooms. A large double bed occupied most of the bedroom while four army cots and a couch stood along the walls of the front room. A kitchen stove had been built in along one of the walls. There was a wooden table and chairs in the middle of the rooms.

The girls were surprised to see me, but expressed very little emotion. They said I could have one of the army cots.

I soon learned that they were hungry and exhausted. Working conditions were bad; the hours very long. The hospitals were overcrowded. There were not enough beds so that patients were placed on the floor. Every inch of space was occupied. There was a lack of medicine and soap. Neither the hospital nor the patients could be kept clean. There was no way of exterminating body lice - the parasites which transmit typhus - and multiplied as the epidemic progressed.

The girls gave credit to the doctors, but they too were hungry, and exhausted from the long difficult hours at the hospital.

I remembered these five girls at the time of our evacuation from Tomsk. They had been so proud of being in the medical service, able to help with the epidemic and save lives.

Now they did not care. They were used to death and suffering. All they wanted was to sleep and dream of home. All they hoped for was that one day they would get back to Manchuria.

They had exchanged all their clothing, <sup>with the exception of</sup> ~~except for~~ 'one change', for food. For the past six months they had only the ration to depend on.

I suggested that they could probably get leave of absence like I did and go to Moscow, but they said no, they were afraid of new experiences and were in no mood for adventures.

I told them that I had a spare five rouble gold piece and asked whether we could buy some food with it. They only shook their heads. Gold was difficult to exchange, they said we might all be arrested for doing it. However, they suggested that I could exchange one of my nightgowns for milk or cottage cheese.

Next morning one of the girls and I went to the black market where we exchanged my nightgown and one of my blouses for a hunk of horse meat, two carrots, one onion and a head of cabbage. Adding the potatoes we had as a ration, we prepared a soup which we stretched out to last four days.

It is marvelous what a bowl of good, hot soup, can do for a hungry person.

I went to the market for a second time exchanging a pillowslip for a pound of dried mushrooms, an onion, and two pounds of buckwheat. These and the flour from our ration we made into a pie.

During this stay in Tomsk there was no music or student songs. No gatherings around the samovar. The men stayed downstairs, the



Girls remained above.

When they returned from duty at the hospital, they went to bed and slept. There was very little conversation and no laughter.

The two weeks passed and I went to see the Dean once again.

Giving me my Moscow pass he suggested that on arrival I should contact the Department of Education and apply for a position.

"Do not ask to enter the University, you will not be allowed to do so immediately", he said. "Besides, by the time you arrive, it will probably be too late in the season to start work in the University. However, if throughout the summer you hold a position with the department of Education in Moscow, in the Fall you will have earned the right to apply for a commission to a university to complete your education."

"The heads of the department of Education are the educators of pre-Communist Russia. Most of them are highly educated idealists. Many new projects are opened up by the department, however the personnel is very limited, so many of the intellectuals and educators have been executed or have left Russia for foreign countries. The Department of Education in Moscow is in need of new people. This is your chance.

Shaking my hand as I was leaving he added

"Just one favour for an old friend. Please be careful. Do not discuss politics, philosophy or religion. Do not criticize the present regime or government. Do not object to anything. Do not share your thoughts with any one. If you follow these simple rules, you might succeed".

He bid me farewell and I went to see Professor Petroff to obtain the letter to his brother.

Early in March at the Tomsk junction I boarded a freight train for Cheliabinsk, the gateway to the Ural Mountains, the last junction where I was to take another train which would take me to Moscow.

As on the previous occasion, the car was dark, the air heavy.  
 Cold weather precluded the opening of the door. The rations once again  
 pitifully small.

The passengers were silent and gloomy. Most of them slept the greater part of the time, moaning and snoring.

At the start of this journey, at one of the small stations, I succeeded in exchanging my second pillow case for a couple of dry, smoked herrings.

Lying on my back in the upper bunk among six other women, I chewed on a piece of dry herring and dreamed of Moscow - the town of 460 churches.

I had not been to Moscow since my grandmother's death, since I was a little girl. It seemed so long ago. So many events had occurred, yet now, in the darkness of the car illuminated only by the coal glowing in the iron stove, I saw the red wall of the Kremlin. The bell tower of Ivan the Terrible, rising above the gilded domes and tiled cupolas. I heard the deep sound of the Cathedral bell answered by others. The sound quickly uniting into a harmonious symphony. These were the chimes of the 460 churches of Moscow.

Religious processions, brilliant royal robes, banners and standards of the Byzantine period, floated before my eyes.

Through the open gates of the monastery I heard a magnificent male choir - voices ranging from trebles to deep basses.

I saw the streets of Moscow covered in white snow. Sleighs pulled by pairs of thoroughbreds slid easily along the snow powdered pavements. Rich furs were everywhere. Doormen responded in their uniforms stood at the entrances of mansions.

I saw a summer day in Moscow, the broad boulevards; trees which whispered at the touch of a light breeze. Women dressed in white loose gowns driven in victorian carriages or walking along the

boulevards. White gloved hands held white silk ~~umbrellas~~ <sup>parasols</sup> above their heads. Large brimmed straw hats decorated by many coloured ribbons could be seen every where.

In my dreams I revisited the art gallery and the theaters. I saw magnificent performances.

During these long hours of dreams which carried me back to my beautiful childhood, I would forget that I was hungry and dirty, that each morning I combed a few lice from my hair, caught a few in my armpits.

During one of these dark days I remembered a poem about a peasant boy on his way to school. One that every Russian child used to know by heart. It was printed in every grammar book used in Russian schools. I had learned it before I knew how to read.

According to this poem, the boy was barefooted and his clothes were torn. The teacher spoke to the child and told him that many famous Russian scholars had begun their education that way. He mentioned a peasant from Archangel who became one of the greatest ~~scientists~~ scientists and poets of Russia.

Here is a translation of the last few lines of this poem which quickened my pulse:-

"Someone will take you to Moscow,  
You will be at the University where,  
the field is unlimited.  
Work and do not fear.  
That is why Holy Russia  
I love you so deeply".

Like a peasant boy, hungry and dirty, I was on my way to Moscow to enter university. To Moscow where the first university had been founded in 1755 and which had remained open to anyone since that time.

The days wore on and at the end of March we reached Cheliabinsk.



Here I was pleasantly surprised that a train for Moscow was due to leave in two hours.

During the wait I located a black market behind the station where I exchanged one of my sheets for two pounds of pine nuts and two dry smoked herrings.

As the Moscow train was a passenger one, there was a rest room with lavatory and wash stand. I had forgotten that such luxuries existed. Although the room was beastly cold and the water icy, I washed my hands and face remembering the public bath-house in Moscow.

The large room used by women had tiled walls. The floor and benches were of gray marble. A shower and wash stand were installed beside each bench so that every bather had a separate one. The water was steaming hot, the air moist, warm and scented with soap.

Just thinking of the bath-house warmed me up despite the cold room, icy water and lack of soap. What a blessing is imagination!

I was fortunate in securing an upper berth next to a window. After more than three weeks of darkness I could see day light at last.

As I had mentioned earlier, Cheliabinsk is the gateway to the Ural region. From this point, the Great Trans-Siberian railway winds through a deep canyon in the Ural mountains.

Lying in my berth, cracking the sweet pine nuts between my teeth, I watched the grandeur of the rugged, precipitous cliffs fringed with gigantic pines in their winter dress. The deep ravines also covered with snow sparkled like diamonds under the slanting beams of the winter sun.

I watched the grayling clouds descend over the mountains and the shadows of the cliff in the silver light of the moon.

I was dirty, hungry, tired and on edge. My perception was at its peak.

Leaving the Urals we entered central Russia - open fields and meadow, mixed forests, birch and oak groves. The weather changed sharply. It was not so cold. Patches of snowdrops appeared from under the melting snow. Brooks were beginning to run.

We were approaching Moscow.

I had had only one bit of trouble. A few days earlier I developed a bad case of dysentery and was most gratefully that it had happened on board the passenger train and not on the freight car, where there was no lavatory.

My heart gave a sharp lurch as I stepped onto the Moscow station in the middle of April. Then it quickly contracted. This could not be Moscow. There was something wrong. For a few minutes I stood still trying to orientate myself and searching my memory.

Yes, this was Moscow. There was the dark red wall of the Kremlin and the Gothic tower of the Spassky Gate. I could see St. Basil's Cathedral this side of the Kremlin wall. As usual the gilded domes and crosses glittered in the morning sun, but no church bells pealed through the air. No pairs of thoroughbreds harnessed to elegant Victorian carriages stamped impatiently. A few rags harnessed to old wagons stood at a distance.

The Red Square was unswept. Here and there groups of sparrows were picking at manure. As I made my way along the streets I saw no doormen standing at the mansion entrances.

I met many pedestrians, all poorly dressed. It used to be that Russian people were always ready to give a friendly smile at the first opportunity. Now their faces were stern and immobile. Heads down, lips compressed they silently went their way.

The doors of the 460 churches in Moscow were closed and behind them was closed the faith and hope of the Russian people. The church bells were silent and with them silent and gloomy was the city of Moscow.

The magnificent grandeur of Moscow's brilliant life had vanished.

My heart bled as I walked along the streets of my beloved Russia. I was burying the ancient capital of old Russia. Burying my dreams.

About 11 a.m. I finally reached the building where Mr. Petroff, the brother of Professor Petroff was employed.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ He was courteous and friendly. Having read the professor's letter he told me that he spent most of his time in the country with his family and came to Moscow only occasionally, this being one of the times. However, his friend Mr. Volkoff was temporarily occupying his two roomed apartment ~~xxx~~ in the city, but was supposed to leave in a couple of days. Then, if I wished, the apartment would be at my disposal.

Mr. Petroff also told me that his friend was a very busy man. He stayed out all day and only returned late at night to sleep, so that I could occupy one of the rooms immediately. As I still had dysentery, I really had no choice.

Mr. Petroff was sure that his friend would not object to sharing the apartment with me for a few days. He gave me a note to the manager of the apartment house and said he would contact Mr. Volkoff during the day.

Early that afternoon I reached Mr. Petroff's apartment. The manager let me into a small vestibule with two doors. One led into a small kitchen, the other into a well furnished sitting room behind which was a bedroom, apparently occupied by Mr. Volkoff.

A large broad davenport stood against one of the walls in the front room. I went to it and lay down.

It was Saturday afternoon. I doubted that I could obtain a ration card at that time and I was not sure where to go or what to do. I was very tired. The dysentery had it's full effect on me, so I decided to

rest until Monday.

I had reached Moscow, my first goal had been accomplished. I could afford to relax for a day then see what should be done.

I woke up about 4 p.m. as Mr. Volkoff entered the room. He was certainly an outstanding man - tall, slim, with broad shoulders. All his mannerisms and actions indicated a leader.

He apologized for waking me and said he had met Mr. Petroff in the afternoon and knew all about me. I was welcome to share the apartment with him, but he would prefer to occupy the bedroom as all his things were there.

I expressed my gratitude and asked whether I should register at the apartment office or at the Commissariat.

He looked very stern as he replied:-

"I would do neither if I were you. You see this is an engineering establishment. Only engineers are supposed to be here. If I understood correctly you will only be here for a short time. You should attach yourself to some educational department as soon as possible. Immediately you are employed living quarters and a ration card will be assigned to you through the department. It is better to avoid personal contact with the commissars and the commissariat.

A new project is to be opened by the department of Children's Education in the near future. Mrs. Nachoroff is engaging new personnel for the project right now. I would suggest that you see her on Monday morning. She is a very intelligent and educated person."

"It would be very nice for you if you can get on this project. You will be with a very interesting group of people. As the project has first priority you will receive a better than average ration. Do not mention my name. It would be unnecessary."



I thanked him for the information and asked if any of the bath-houses were open.

He shook his head "No, there is not enough wood in Moscow to keep the water hot for such an establishment.

He started towards his room, then stopped and turned to me:-

"You look all in. Are you ill?" he asked.

I explained that I had dysentery and was very tired. He promised to give me some pills on the way out. He was in a hurry.

A few minutes later he came out of his room and giving me the pills said: "There is a bottle of dry red wine in the kitchen. You had better take a glass right now and a glass of strong tea and wine later. You will find some food in the icebox and bread in the kitchen. Please help yourself. I will bring more food when I return on Sunday night. Although it may be better if you do not eat anything today. Just drink the wine and hot tea.

He left, I followed his instructions and went back to sleep. Later I had the hot tea and wine. I took the pills regularly every three hours all through the night and in the morning felt much better. I drank another glass of hot tea and wine and ate a white French roll. To my surprise I found three of these in the kitchen. I had not seen white bread since I left Harbin.

During the day I stayed on hot tea, wine and rolls and in the evening had a soft boiled egg. Another luxury. The only time I had eggs since leaving Harbin was with the Vanberg's in Irkutsk. It seemed so long ago.

I longed to change into clean clothes but decided against it. There was no place where I could wash them, no hot water or soap, nor a place to dry them. I had lice in my hair, probably nits in the seams

of my clothes. I wanted to be sure none of these remained when I packed them in my suitcase again. I would have liked to throw them out but I could not afford to do so. By now all that remained of my clothing was one set of spare underwear, one blouse, one suit and three cotton dresses. I stayed in all day and went to bed early.

On Monday morning I found another half dozen French rolls and some cheese on the kitchen table. Apparently Mr. Volkoff had returned during the night, but I had neither seen nor heard him. The door to his room was closed.

I left the apartment at 8 o'clock to see Mrs. Sacharoff, who proved to be a very interesting person. The interview was very pleasant.

She asked about my education. We talked about art, art galleries and old masters. We discussed the theater, theatrical performances - opera and drama. Then she led the conversation into the field of literature and psychology. It was about two hours later that she began to talk about the new project.

According to her this project had been an old idea of the former Minister of Education of the Imperial Russian regime - Mr. L.

Mr. L. was an idealist. After the collapse of Imperial Russia, he accepted communism and was still in charge of the department of education. After many years he had finally succeeded in promoting his pet project - the organization of a home for talented children.

The first problem was the selection of talented children and the following program had been adopted for this purpose:

A group of children who were interested in any form of art would be placed under a "Teacher Observer" whose duty would be to observe and describe in a written report the characteristics of every child in the group. All the children in a particular group would be of the same age. Minimum enrollment age was five years old. The period of observation

was to be from two to eight weeks.

Three "Teacher-observers" were assigned to each group. The daily observation period for each teacher was only three hours, so that the first teacher observer would be replaced by another one after three hours and she, in turn, would be replaced at the end of the same period.

Twice a week the three teachers of the same group would meet to compare notes and discuss the characteristics of each child. Once a week there would be a joint meeting of "Teacher-observers" of the different groups in the same age bracket. Different problems in regard to the characters of the children, special difficulties and talents would be discussed.

Should a Teacher-observer consider that a child would benefit by a transfer to another group of the same age, this would be decided upon.

All the children and personnel would live on community grounds assigned by the department.

Each group of children would have their own "mother".

The duty of the mother was to create a home atmosphere for the children, although they would all eat in a communal dining room. Continuous communication between the mother and "Teacher Observers" would be expected.

At the end of eight weeks - the observation period - a complete report on the characteristics and talent of each child in a group was to be presented to the department.

Children would be regrouped on the basis of these reports. Special teachers would be assigned to the groups and special classes and courses arranged.

Mrs. Sacharoff asked me whether I would like to be a "Teacher Observer".

I was delighted. Mrs. Sacharoff replied that she also was very pleased to have me on the staff. She said my papers would be ready the following afternoon.

I asked her whether she knew of a public bath-house that was open. She smiled and replied:

"You will have to wait until tomorrow when your living quarters will be assigned to you. You will live on the premises designated for the "Talented Children's Home", which was formerly occupied by an old fashionable Moscow school. There is a small private bath-house on the grounds. Although the school is not functioning yet - there are no children, the Home is in effect open and as there are only a few teachers, there will probably be lots of hot water for your bath".

She dismissed me saying "I will see you tomorrow afternoon".

Distances in Moscow are great, especially when one is on foot. It was late afternoon when I returned to the apartment. Giving me the key the manager informed me that Mr. Volkoff had left that morning and I was now the sole occupant of the apartment.

There were still French rolls and cheese on the table. Eggs were in the icebox.

Mr. Volkoff's room was empty. The bed freshly made. I had a luxurious meal of soft boiled eggs, roll and cheese, a glass of tea and wine. I was relaxed, tired and happy. I went to bed - to a real good bed with clean sheets.

I wished I could have had a bath, however it really did not matter as there were but some fifteen hours left before the following afternoon. The afternoon when, after this long period of drifting and sleeping I

would begin to live again.

It was after midnight when I was wakened by a pounding on the door and a loud voice demanding that I open it in the name of the law.

As I opened the door, three soldiers and a civilian stepped in. One soldier went into the kitchen immediately, a second into the front room.

The civilian showed me his identification card. It was from the Cheka.

A few minutes later the soldiers reported that there was no one else in the apartment. The civilian motioned us into the front room. He ordered a complete search, then turning to me demanded:-

"Where is the man?"

I was sleepy and bewildered, and replied "What man?"

Ignoring my answer he demanded again:

"Who lives in this apartment?"

"I do", I replied.

He sent one of the soldiers for the manager of the apartment house and the register. The soldier went out. The other two continued the search.

A large trunk covered with a Persian rug stood against a wall of the front room. It was locked and I was asked for the key.

I explained that it was not mine and that I had no key. I showed them my suitcase and gave the key to one of the soldiers. They broke the lock on the trunk and opened it. It contained two fur coats for a man, two eiderdowns, a man's suits and overcoats. There were no ~~woman~~ feminine clothes in the trunk. Full size portraits of Nicholas II and Alexander III drew sarcastic remarks from the soldiers.

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feminine clothes in the trunk. Full size portraits of Nicholas II and Alexander III drew sarcastic remarks from the soldiers.

After the search was completed and the contents of the trunk replaced, it was sealed.

My suitcase also was searched and sealed.

Meanwhile the third soldier had returned with the building manager and registration book, which the Cheka man examined. Then looking at me and tapping his short thick fingers on one of the pages he said:-

"Once more, who occupies this apartment?"

I repeated "I do".

The eyes of the Cheka man were very cold, there was no expression on his face as he stated:

"According to this book Mr. Volkoff lives in this apartment. Your name is not registered".

"Where is the man?"

I told him again that I did not know anything about the man, where he was, who he was, nor what he was doing.

His smile was sarcastic as he said:

"Do you mean to say that you live in a one-bedroom apartment with the man and do not know anything about him?"

"Please be reasonable" he continued. "We have a message for Mr. Volkoff. We wish to identify him and pass the message on. It is important that he receive it. He has been waiting a long time for it".

I told him I would have gladly co-operated if I had known anything

Pulling at his ear he turned towards the manager saying:-

"We will leave now and take the girl with us".

The manager was a woman about 40 years old, apparently of Polish descent. She had a round face and round blue eyes.

Her face seemed to lengthen and fear flickered in her eyes as she whispered

"The girl does not know anything about him."

The Cheka man bowed to her and said:

"The girl has nothing to fear if she is innocent".

"Could she take her suitcase with her?" asked the caretaker

I replied that it was ridiculous. I had nothing to fear and would be back in half an hour. I was certain the police would bring me back.

We left the apartment and got into a carriage for four. I sat with the man from Cheka. Two soldiers were on the seat opposite us, the third sat with the driver.

It was a warm spring night. I wore my travelling suit. We sat silent. The gilded church crosses shone in the light of the moon.

We stopped at a large white stone building, one of several forming a square.

Soldiers armed with rifles marched back and forth along the sidewalk. Armed guards stood at each entrance.

I was shown into a large room the closed door of which was guarded by two armed men both on the outside and on the inside.

The room was crowded, every space on the benches which stood in rows, was occupied by poorly dressed people. As many more stood near the walls or in the passage way.

Across the room, opposite to the entrance was another closed door with two armed guards. Next to it was a long desk guarded by three soldiers with rifles. Two policemen were apparently interrogating the occupants of the room.

After questioning people were let out through the door next to the desk. The interviews seemed to be very short, however ~~many~~ twice as many people seemed to be led into the room as those who left.

For such a ~~large~~ large crowd the room appeared unusually quiet.



Only the loud voice summoning people to the desk by name, broke the silence.

Fear filled the air and showed in the eyes of the occupants. Silent tears trickled down the faces of some of the women. The crowd was motionless except for the occasional shifting of weight from one foot to another among those standing.

It was late in the afternoon when I was finally called.

I was asked my name, age, address and where I was born. My passport and 'leave of absence' form from Tomsk were taken away. After that I was let out through the door next to the desk.

As soon as I stepped through, two soldiers with rifles came on either side of me. They marched me across a paved yard enclosed by a high brick wall, here armed guards stood at every entrance to every building and every entrance to every room. We entered a doorway and went up to the third floor.

We came to a heavy, locked door. One of the guards here unlocked it and we stepped in.

A woman about 35 years old met us as we entered. She was ~~about~~ dressed in a dark uniform with a police badge.

Five rows of beds, six beds in each, occupied most of the room. The space between was so narrow that only one person could pass at a time. A wooden table with a water canteen and two wooden mugs stood near the door. An armchair was next to it. There was no other furniture in the room.

The soldiers gave the matron a paper to sign and left. The door was locked behind them.

The matron pointed to an empty bed in the center of the room. All the others were occupied. There were no sheets or pillow, only an army blanket laid across the mattress.

I went to the bed and the Matron to the armchair at the table. I was exhausted and longed only to lie down.

There was a large window in the room without bars. Thank God it was open, I could feel the fresh moist spring air. I closed my eyes and began to wonder what had happened to me and what would come next.

I had been summoned from my apartment in the middle of the night. Apparently for interrogation, I had been kept waiting in the interrogation room for over fifteen hours without food, then without any interrogation I had been transferred into this room and locked in with twenty-nine other women. I wondered why.

This was not a prison, there were no bars on the window, yet we were locked in and heavily guarded.

The strange quiet in this room of thirty women affected my nerves. Even with my eyes closed I could feel the fear and anxiety of the other twenty-nine occupants. I always responded to the mood of the crowd.

I opened my eyes and saw a woman standing at the window. I decided to join her.

The window overlooked another large paved courtyard bordered by a high brick wall. We could not see the street. There was another building adjacent to ours. Guards were everywhere. They stood at the entrances, and marched along the walls. Two guards stood at a large iron gate set into the wall. It too was shut.

The woman at the window neither moved nor spoke as I approached, so I asked her

"What is this place?"

"Don't you know?"

She asked in reply. I shook my head.

"It is Lubianka" she whispered.

"Lubianka" did not mean anything to me, so I questioned her again:

"What is Lubianka, what is it's function?"

"Lubianka is the place of preliminary confinement by the Cheka for final interrogation. Usually those who enter Lubianka do not return home. They are either executed or sent to prisons in North Siberia for long periods of heavy labor".

"Will all these women here be either executed or sent to Siberia? What have they done?" I asked involuntarily before I had even realized what I was saying.

She shrugged her shoulders. "I really do not know. It seems to me that most of them are involved in the black market or accused of stealing food. At present these crimes are punished either by 25 years imprisonment or by execution by a firing squad.

The matron interrupted our conversation by saying

"Citizen, do not crowd the window.

We returned to our beds.

A few cots away two women sat on the edge of one bed and holding the edge of the next mattress in their left hands struck it repeatedly with the heel of a shoe they held in their right. They were very preoccupied. An expression of deep satisfaction flickered over their faces each time they struck the mattress. I thought it was an unusual game, however it appeared to amuse them.

The woman in the next bed looked at me and I asked her whether we were fed here and when.

She replied that the main meal was brought in at noon, and a canteen of barley coffee and bread was supplied at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

It was not much, she said and it was not very good.

Barley coffee, apparently was hot water poured over cracked barley. It was light brownish in colour and had a slightly bitter taste. I had tasted it a few times during my trip after we left Cheliabinsk.

I went and poured myself a mug of water. I was very hungry and cold.

A loud whistle announced six o'clock. Like automations, every one of the prisoners sat up and looked alert.

The door was unlocked from outside. A soldier stepped in with a basket of wooden mugs and a second of bread. Two others followed carrying a large canteen of barley coffee. Three armed guards closed the procession. The canteen and mugs were set on the table, the basket of bread handed to the matron. The soldiers and guards left, locking the door behind them.

The matron called out "Come and get it!"

Everyone jumped from their beds and pushing and jostling crowded around the table and matron. There was one mug and a small piece of black bread left by the time I reached the table. Giving me the bread the matron asked whether I was hungry.

I said "Yes".

She looked at me sarcastically and said:

"If you are hungry, why did you not get here earlier? It's a good thing I saved this piece for you. There is no one here to wait on you. You have to get your own".

My piece of bread was slightly damp. Apparently it had not risen properly and was indigestible. I was thankful the barley coffee was hot. I was so chilled that my hands shook as I began to eat.

I suddenly remembered Zimbirsk and Avdotiya - the peasant woman from across the river. She used to bring us black bread. It was of the same type as I was eating now, only Avdotia's was well baked and delicious. I wondered what had happened to the Russian people and Russian production.

The woman I had spoken to at the window came to my bed. She pressed a lump of sugar into my hand saying:

"You probably missed your ration today. This will give you strength. My mother brought it for me yesterday".

I thanked her and asked if she would like to sit with me. Lowering herself onto my bed she asked:-

"Where did you come from? You are not a native of Moscow. Your accent is different. I can not place it. It is not quite that of Leningrad".

I satisfied her curiosity. When I had finished she posed another question:

"May I ask why you are here?"

I described my arrest.

She thought it was serious, as apparently I was being accused of counter-revolutionary activities.

There was nothing I could add to her statement, so to change the conversation I asked how long she expected to be kept in this place.

Not looking at me she said: "I have committed a crime not only against the country and the people, but against God as well. I will be grateful if I get twenty five years of heavy labour in North Siberia. I hope that during these long years I shall be able to earn God's forgiveness."

"But what have you done?" I exclaimed.

This time looking directly at me she said:-

"I stole 16.7 pounds of flour from the government".

"Do you realize," she continued, "what this means at present?

At a time when there is not enough food to keep people alive, I stole 16.7 pounds of flour. Because of my action the orphanage did not get it's flour ration. Possible because of this some children have died of starvation".

She stopped for a second, then pointing to two girls on the opposite side of the room she continued:-

"See the two girls there, they are much younger than I. Because of me they also will go to Siberia for a long term of heavy labour. I could have stopped them, I could have saved them, but I did not. I joined them". She stopped again and looked silently through the open window across the room.

I questioned her: "How could you do it, when you feel so strongly against it?"

She replied "I do not know. I think it must have been the devil. I will tell you the story."

"I was a teacher of Russian grammar in a high school and lost my position when Moscow was taken over by the Bolshevicks. We were very poor after that. I had my mother and father to support. We exchanged our jewels and clothes for food on the black market.

A year later I succeeded in getting a position at the Department of Food Distribution. It was a priority project so I had a double ration, but still we were hungry.

One day the two girls and I were completing the monthly distribution records when we discovered a 50 pound <sup>bag</sup> of flour. It had not been recorded anywhere. We checked the books over and over again. We could

not trace where it had come from, not where it should be delivered.

It was late and we were hungry. One of the girls suggested that we divide it between us and go home.

None of us could resist the temptation.

They are so much younger than I. They grew up during the civil war, they have no stability, but I should have known better. Well, any way, we divided the flour and went home.

Two weeks later the loss of the fifty pounds of flour was discovered. I was glad, because I felt so guilty. I was unable to eat the bread mother had baked out of it."

She stopped talking and looked at the matron. Then she suggested that we return the mugs to the table as the meal hour was over. We returned them. She went to her bed and I to mine.

Three soldiers and three guards came to collect the mugs and coffee canteen.

The matron closed the window and put on her coat. Another matron came in for night duty.

I watched the two young girls who had stolen the sack of flour. They looked quite ordinary. One was thin with a small freckled face which was swollen from tears. The other was plump, bright eyed. She did not seem to be disturbed, only bored. She did not look hungry. She was eating a chicken leg when I looked at her.

Darkness descended over the city. The light had been put on and turned off again. It was time to sleep.

I twisted and turned. My skin seemed to be on fire. Time dragged.

Suddenly the light was turned on again. The door opened. Six guards entered. A search was announced.

All the prisoners jumped from their beds, so did I. ~~Accidentally~~

I glanced at the mattress and my heart contracted with horror. It was alive with <sup>small</sup> brownish-red round insects, which quickly disappeared into the seams. There only remained



Idly I glanced at the mattress and my heart contracted in horror. It was alive with small, round, brownish-red insects which disappeared quickly into the seams. Only blood stains remained. I looked at my underwear. It too was stained with blood, my blood which I had squeezed from the bed bugs after they had finished their meal. I knew about bed bugs, but I had never seen one before.

I stood almost paralyzed while people behind pushed me.

The matron was calling: "To the wall! Everybody step to the wall".

Finally all of us were ranged around the walls and the search began. Beds were moved, suitcases opened, mattresses turned over. Two pencils and writing paper were confiscated.

The search was over in about fifteen minutes. The guards left. Only fear remained in the room.

The matron turned off the light.

"Do you know what the guards were searching for?" I asked the woman in the bed next to me.

"Do not speak so loudly" she replied, "We are not supposed to talk when the light is out."

"No I do not know what they were searching for. I have been here for over two weeks now. The searches always take place at night and are not announced in advance. There have been five or six of them since I came. Once the guards took a woman away. We have not heard of her since. It is frightening".

She shivered under her blanket and turned over.

I was more frightened of the bedbugs than I was of the soldiers.

I still could not believe what had happened to me. It seemed fantastic that I was locked up awaiting execution or twenty five years hard labour in Northern Siberia.

What had I done?

I glanced at the ~~matress~~ and my heart contracted with horror. It  
was alive with <sup>small</sup> brownish-red round insects, which quickly disappeared  
into the seams. There only remained

The night dragged on. I continued to twist and turn. Occasionally I would leave the bed and beat the heel of my shoe against the mattress. It was dark. I could not see where I hit. I remembered the game the two women played across the room. Now I understood the satisfaction they experienced on killing the bedbugs.

After a long, long time, the sun peered through the window. Women began to wake up, yawning, stretching and scratching themselves.

A queue to the lavatory formed. Most of the prisoners had towels, some had soap. Their relatives and friends tried to do their best for them. I had no towel or soap, neither had I any relatives or friends in Moscow. I was alone.

Once again a whistle proclaimed it was 6 a.m. As at 6 p.m. the previous day, everyone sat up ready to pounce.

Three soldiers accompanied by three guards brought in the canteen of barley coffee, a basket of bread and one of wooden mugs. As yesterday, everyone rushed to grab a mug and receive the coffee and piece of bread.

Once again I was the last to reach the table and got the last of the serving.

With daylight the bed bugs retreated into the seams of the mattresses. Everyone including me, went to sleep.

We were wakened by the loud noon whistle. The scene of the morning was repeated, however this time the soldiers brought in a kettle of soup and wooden bowls and spoons instead of mugs. The prisoners rushed to the table. This time they actually fought each other for the bowls. Finally a line was formed and soldiers

filled the bowls with soup.

When the fighting was over I went to the table, but there were no bowls left.

The matron gave me a piece of bread saying:

"I told you that if you wanted to eat you should come earlier and fight for a bowl. No one will serve you here!"

I did not reply, but took the piece of bread and a mug of water.

The guards and soldiers left.

Pointing to a group of women who were eating out of one large bowl the matron said "See, there are three women sharing a large bowl which should be enough for four. You may join them".

She told the women to share their soup with me and they complied unwillingly.

The soup was a lukewarm liquid with a few pieces of fish floating in it. It had a strong unpleasant smell. The piece of black bread was about three inches square and a quarter inch thick. It was indigestible.

Time dragged, but the days passed. Each was a replica of the previous one. The nights were broken by searches.

A few days after my imprisonment three soldiers came in the middle of the night and took one woman away.

We never heard of her any more. She vanished from our lives. We did not know whether she had been sent to Siberia or had been executed. It did not seem as if she had been let out. Next morning the guard took away her suitcase. Another woman was brought in the next afternoon. She occupied the empty bed.

The uncertainty and waiting were the most difficult part of the imprisonment. Fear dominated the prisoners and wrecked their nerves.

Hysterical tears were common after searches.

Every two or three nights someone would be taken away and vanish. Everyone was waiting for their turn.

There was very little communication between the prisoners. During the noon meal a group of three or four would be allowed to eat together from the same bowl, because according to the ~~ration~~ ration most of the bowls contained enough for that number. There were a few bowls for two, and fewer yet for one. However no long conversations were permitted during meals.

The only common occupation allowed was the killing of bed bugs. The results were better if two or three people worked on the same mattress at once. Otherwise no more than two persons were permitted to sit and talk together, and then for no longer than ten or fifteen minutes.

Under these circumstances the women did not have an opportunity to get to know each other. Each was isolated in herself. Each feared the others. No one talked out loud. Everyone whispered.

Now and then the soldiers would come in and ask for volunteers to clean the living quarters. If no one volunteered the matron would select a number of women arbitrarily.

I also was chosen. One day the soldiers asked for four women, three volunteered and the matron selected me as the fourth.

Four of us, walking in pairs, with four soldiers to a pair marched across the prison yard. There never were less than two soldiers to a person taken out of the room.

We were set to scrubbing floors. I did this very badly getting in the way of the other women who swore and cursed me.

Twice a week food parcels from relatives or friends in the outside world were delivered to the prisoners.

Once a week, on Sundays, between 3 and 5, the prisoners were permitted to see visitors in a separate room and accept parcels of food. These packages were carefully searched before either the prisoners or visitors were allowed to leave the room. Usually visiting day was followed by a night search as well.

It was thanks to these visiting hours that some news of the outside world reached our room.

Thus on the fourth day of my imprisonment I heard that all the inmates of "Butyrka" ( a well known prison for criminals in Moscow during the Imperial regime) had gone on a hunger strike. According to the rumour the prisoners had declared the food served them was so indigestible that it would be less painful to die of starvation without eating the food. The prisoners did not starve in silence at Butyrka. They stood at the windows and howled like wolves so that the whole population of Moscow was aware of their plight.

Their discontent was contagious and led to riots in Moscow. When I heard about the strike it had already been in progress for several days. A number of prisoners and civilians had been executed, but the inmates continued to howl. It lasted ten days.

More than two weeks had passed since I had been taken from the apartment. I had not been interrogated, nor had I been informed of why I had been jailed or how long I would remain locked up.

By this time the seams of my clothes were thick with nits. Lice crawled freely over my body and my hair was full of them. Everyone in the room had lice. We were all dirty. However since I had been travelling for so long and had no change of clothing with me, no soap

towel or comb, I was the dirtiest.

The women rejected me because of my dirt; because I did not fight for food; because my form of speech, accent and manners were different to theirs. They rejected me because I did not know how to scrub floors or wash windows.

Most of my room-mates belonged to the small vendor class. I had never met this particular type of people before. They were coarse, cowardly and sneaky.

For the first time in my life I became aware of class distinctions. Our principal<sup>les</sup> thoughts and actions were quite different. The gap was so large that communication between us was almost impossible. There were only two exceptions. The woman I had first met at the window - the one who stole the sack of flour and her plump companion.

The first one had accepted her sin, confessed her crime. She was the most severe judge of her action and expected a severe punishment. Through self-crusifixion she found peace and serenity.

The second was completely opposite. She had not confessed her crime, had declared that she was innocent. In her opinion her two companions had been fools to confess under the pressure of interrogation. Now they would have to pay for it, while she would never confess and therefore go free.

Her family were doing their best for her. They brought her clean clothes every week and took the dirty ones with them. They brought her chicken, milk, white bread, sugar etc. Food that only very few could get.

She was well fed, not a bit nervous or afraid, only bored. She ate and slept a lot waiting to be let out.

Such were the conditions under which I lived for over two weeks and the people I met.

Hysterical tears were common after searches.

Every two or three nights someone would be taken away, never to return.



I noticed I was beginning to lose strength, my spirit and my nerve. I feared I had been forgotten.

Turning and twisting during the long sleepless nights, I thought about the prison, the prisoners and Butyrka. I speculated about the Butyrka 'starvation strike'. I rather regretted that I was locked up at Lubyanka and not at Butyrka. It seemed to me that although the inmates of the latter were criminals they at least had courage and unity. They probably were more interesting types of people than the ones here with me.

The day following my cogitations on Butyrka, I learned by chance that every prisoner had the right to complain, provided the complaint or demand was written on a special form. This form could be obtained from the guards when they came into the room in the morning. The petitions were seldom used because prisoners feared that any complaint or demand could be interpreted as sabotage or criticism of the Government.

As soon as I heard about this regulation I decided to take advantage of it.

Next morning, watched by the guard I wrote the following:-

"I, the undersigned, would like to be transferred to Butyrka Prison while awaiting interrogation".

The guard, the matron and I signed the note.

I was surprised at the effect my action had on the prisoners. Everybody was extremely curious about what I had written in my note. I suddenly became the center of attention. Every fifteen minutes one woman or another would steal up to my bed. For the first time since my imprisonment the matron continuously asked the prisoners to keep quiet, stop talking and stay on their beds.

Hysterical tears were common after searches.

Every two or three nights someone would be taken away, never to return.

A few of the women asked me to share their noonday bowl of soup, so that we could talk. I was not usually invited to share the meal unless the matron suggested it.

It was against my fundamental <sup>les</sup>principals to fight a hungry person for food - especially a comrade in misfortune. In addition the soup had an unpleasant odor. The light gray liquid with pieces of fish floating in it was not very appetising. It was not worth fighting for.

The commotion continued for about two days. Now I understood why a note like mine could be considered sabotage. It brought excitement to very depressed individuals, excitement which could easily flare up into revolt.

In a couple of days everything became normal again, however communication between me and the other women became established.

Ten days passed with no answer to my note. During this period I heard that the only way to receive any response from the Cheka's Comissars was to declare a starvation strike. I gathered that no prisoner should be allowed to die before interrogation, that was a rule of Cheka.

Apparently prior to the Butyrka ~~strike~~ incident starvation strikes were very popular among prisoners, how ever the Head of the Cheka had now declared that every prisoner who decided to starve himself would be executed by a firing squad.

A month passed from the date of my arrest. My strength decreased rapidly, my nerves were shattered.

My only food consisted of two mugs of barley-coffee and three small pieces of black bread daily. The bread was indigestible and lay like a stone in my stomach. I finally came to the conclusion that

under these conditions I would die from undernourishment sooner or later or else be eaten alive by the lice and bedbugs. Under the circumstances the sooner I died the better. I had nothing to lose by starting a starvation strike. The worst I could expect was facing a firing squad and I much preferred this type of death to slow decay brought on by starvation and parasites.

The decision was made.

I wrote another note in front of the guard which said:-

"If within the next three days I, the undersigned, am not called up for interrogation, I shall refuse to accept food or water until the interrogation does take place".

The matron and the guard signed the note as witnesses.

Commotion stirred the room again. Every woman in the room came to my cot. As soon as they found out what I had written they became concerned and tried to cheer me up by bringing me something to eat, a bit of salami or cheese, smoked herring, white bread, a piece of sugar etc. Products which were hard to obtain in Russia and only very few could afford. Food that relatives had brought as a last tribute to their loved ones whom they did not expect to leave Lubyanka free. Siberia was their only hope.

Naturally I was very grateful, but refused the food. I was not playing games. On the third day agitation reached it's peak. The women demanded that I should be interviewed.

Disregarding the matron's orders to leave me alone the prisoners came to my bed. They washed my face, wet my lips, stroked my head and killed the bed bugs.

The atmosphere in the room became electric; ready to explode at any moment.

I realized that involuntarily I had become, for a second time, the cause of a disturbance which could easily result in a riot. According to the law of the Cheka I should be executed. It seemed to me that the end was near.

That day at six p.m. when the barley coffee was brought in, the guard summoned me by name. He gave me a note to sign promising to call off the starvation strike and stating that from now on I would behave and accept food and water. I refused to sign and the guard told me to follow him.

As soon as we stepped out of the door two more guards came on either side of me.

We marched in silence across the yard into another building. We descended into the basement. Two soldiers with rifles marched back and forth along the corridor.

We stopped at a heavy wooden door. Letting me into the room the guard said:

"If you need to go to the lavatory or if you decide to stop the strike, pound on the door. He left, and locked the door behind me.

I found myself in an eight by six foot dank cell. An army cot with straw mattress covered by an army blanket stood against the wall. Otherwise the cell was empty.

A window, one foot square, protected by iron bars, overlooked the prison yard. From the outside it was close to the ground, from inside it was near the ceiling. The narrow sill was level with my shoulders. The prison yard was empty except for the guards marching along the wall. The room was still except for the rhythmic sound made by guards marching on the pavement which periodically came through

the open window.

For the past month I had lived in a room with 29 women. It too was almost always silent, however that stillness was not relaxing. It was unnatural for 30 women to be still. There I constantly felt an undercurrent of tension, fear and despair. It bounced from person to person contaminating everyone.

Here, in this dank, mute cell, I suddenly felt relaxed. I was myself, I was not affected by the mood of others.

A slanting beam of the evening sun painted a vibrating golden shadow on the wall, just over the bed. I lay down trying to be in the path of the sun. I was very cold and very tired.

I closed my eyes and went to sleep.

When I wakened, the sun was high. I felt refreshed and relaxed. This was the first night I had really slept since being imprisoned.

To my delight there were no bedbugs in the straw mattress.

I went to the window. The prison yard was empty except for the guards. A few clouds floated across the clear sky.

I stood still for a few minutes, strangely I felt at peace.

According to the other prisoners, I would be left alone for the next seven days. At the end of this period I would either be called up for questioning or be executed.

It seemed fantastic that I should find myself in such circumstance

I returned to the bed and began to retrace the path which had led me here.

I began with that unforgettable day, which I really could not remember. The day grandfather leaned over my cradle for the first time

Probably if it was not for that week in the cell, this could not have been written.

Time passes by and with it incidents escape our memory unless we bring them back. That week of isolation helped me in my search for memories.

Thus the week passed. No one came to see me during these seven days. I never knocked on the door, there was no need. I had neither food nor water and did not require to use the lavatory.

I slept well through the nights, without any dreams. I dreamed in the day time, reliving my past step by step.

At the end of the seventh day I began to wonder whether I had been forgotten. The sun was setting and I still had not been called for an interrogation.

It could be that I was left to die from starvation. I wondered how long I could last. It was possible that tomorrow would never come for me.

I went to the window to say my last goodbye to the setting sun. I could not see the sun itself, but pink clouds were floating over the sky.

I passionately wished that the chime of church bells would spread through the air, but the bells of Moscow were mute, no sound of them entered my cell.

I returned to the bed and closed my eyes.

The clatter of keys outside my door woke me. Two guards entered the cell. One of them held a lantern above his head. The dim light broke the darkness and threw fantastic shadows on the floor.

The guard asked me if I was ready to call off the starvation strike, I replied that I was not. He then told me to come along. I left the cell between the two guards.

The night was dark and still, only our footsteps broke the silence.

We marched across the yard, through the gate, across another yard and entered a building. We went to the second floor and walked along a corridor with a row of heavy doors - a guard at each one. Finally I was let into a brightly lit room. Two guards stood at the door inside the room.

A large desk in the center was covered with notes and papers.

A man sat at the desk facing the door. He was about 40 years old, bald, with a round face, ~~and~~ small nose and small gray eyes.

He pointed to a chair in front of the desk. I sat down facing him.

He was looking at a sheet of paper wrinkling his forehead and nose.

"Citizen, do you know what time it is?"

As I shook my head, he continued:

"It is half an hour after midnight. Do you know that I came to this office at seven this morning? I am still here!"

"Every employee of the Cheka is on duty for 16 hours a day. We are performing an important task in interrogating prisoners as rapidly as we can."

"By demanding an interrogation when we are not ready for it, you sabotage the functions of the government".

I replied that I was sorry, however, it was over a month since I had been brought in for interrogation to the Cheka, to make a statement that I did not know anything about a certain Mr. Volkoff whom I had met for five minutes while he was crossing the room I slept

The Cheka man watched my face as I spoke.

"Please citizen, do not underestimate the Cheka organization. We knew by next morning that you had nothing to do with Mr. Volkoff, otherwise you would have been executed without further interrogation



as would any other person known to be connected with Mr. Volkoff. For your information Mr. Volkoff is an enemy of the Soviet Government. He is a leader of counter-revolutionary movements".

"What we wish to know, is what are you doing in Moscow?"

I could not control a smile as I replied:

"Don't you know that I have been starving in your prison since the day of my arrival?"

"If you know that I am innocent of the Cheka accusation, why do you keep me locked up?"

He remained silent for a few minutes, looked at the paper on his desk again, tapping his thick fingers on the edge of the table, then said:

"You asked to be transferred to Butyrka. Why?"

I answered that as long as I was imprisoned, I could just as well fill in my time learning about the life of the criminals in Butyrka.

Looking straight into my eyes, he asked:

"Why did you come to Moscow?"

I explained I had come to complete my education.

He shook his bald head saying:

"It is difficult to believe that a person could exchange heaven for hell for the sake of an education. In Manchuria you were in an earthly paradise. In Manchuria there is food, fuel, clothing, even wine - everything man's soul can desire."

"Here we have nothing but riots and sabotage. People are starving all over the country. There is no fuel and no material."

"Yet you come to Moscow to complete your education?"

"However, for the present let us disregard your motives for coming here. Let us consider the facts".

"At present travelling in Russia is very difficult. Permits for transportation are not easy to get. They are not given to anyone at any time. One of Cheka's duties is to interrogate every person moving from one place to another."

"Manchuria is far away. You should have been stopped at Chita, certainly at Irkutsk, without mentioning Tomsk".

"But you managed to cross Siberia and land in Moscow!"

"How did you manage to leave Manchuria and cross the border to Russia?"

"If you were pro communist you should have been executed at the Manchurian border. If you were "white" you should have been executed as soon as you crossed the border. How did you manage to avoid it?"

"You must have contacts to be able to get across Siberia to Moscow. We wish to know who these contacts are. We have to be sure that you are not one of the 'undergrounds'. So far we are unable to find anything on you."

"Will you please co-operate and clear these points up for me?"

He stopped talking and lit a cigarette, apparently waiting for my answer.

So I began by saying that I had not been aware of any political difficulties. There had been many physical ones, such as hunger, dirt and cold. There had been long hours, even days of delay in the train due to snowfalls, lack of fuel, etc.

I had had to wait in Chita for the commission to Tomsk, however there had been no special interrogation, certainly no imprisonment. I would say it was more of a delay caused by red tape.

In Tomsk I had been given a pass to Moscow because the schools in Tomsk were closed due to an epidemic of typhus and lack of food. The town had been evacuated and there certainly was not enough food

for an extra mouth.

I told him I had no political contacts, had not been involved in politics, therefore it would be difficult to find any information on my political actions.

When I stopped, he remained silent, lighting another cigarette. Then, looking straight into my eyes again asked:

"If I let you go now, where would you go and what would you do?"

I did not expect the question, so I remained silent trying to collect my thoughts.

I wondered where would I go and what would I do on getting out of prison.

I was very cold and tired. I did not want to remain in Moscow any longer. I would like to go south. I had always been interested in Kiev in the Ukraine. Kiev was the cradle of Russia - the cradle of Russian fairy tales. In Kiev on dark nights women flew through windows on brooms, while the saints slept in their coffins. In Kiev, on the bank of the Dnieper river, water nymphs combed their green hair with golden combs on warm summer nights.

Those were the legends about Kiev I had known from early childhood.

Just before she was taken ill, grandmother had promised we would go to Kiev.

The Cheka man interrupted my thoughts by repeating his question. Before I realized what I was saying, I told him that I would go to Kiev.

"Kiev!" he exclaimed.

"Why Kiev, do you have friends there?"

There was a gleam of interest in his eyes as he watched my face.

"What we wish to know, is why are you in Moscow

the leader of a counter-revolutionary movement".

Information Mr. Volkoff is an enemy of the Soviet Government. He is  
as any other person who had connections with Mr. Volkoff. For your

I only shook my head and tried to explain why I would like to go to Kiev.

He interrupted me by saying that so far all of answers had been pure fantasy. However he really believed that I had never been involved in any political activity, which fact - according to him - was fantastic in itself at that period.

He finished his speech by saying:

"Do you realize, citizen, that what I believe does not matter, I need proof."

"We are both tired now. Will you please sign the note stating that you will stop your starvation strike as of this moment. The guard will take you back to the other women. I will send you a bottle of milk and white bread so that you can get your strength back. I will do my best to get the necessary information which will set you free, as soon as possible."

Signing the note I asked "How long do you think it will take you to collect your information?"

He wrinkled his nose and his forehead before he replied:

"You know how long it took you to get here. The only way I can carry on my investigation is by mail. The mail will reach it's destination no faster than the time you spent in the train. In addition there will be red tape. We should also allow for the time required to interrogate witnesses".

I interrupted him by saying:

"In that case it will take a year at least to complete your investigation."

"Do you expect to keep me in jail all that time?"

He replied that there was no other place where I could be kept.

I gave him back the note I had just signed saying:

"What we wish to know, is why are you in Moscow

the leader of a counter-revolutionary movement".

Information Mr. Volkoff is an enemy of the Soviet Government. He is

as any other person who had connections with Mr. Volkoff. For your

"I had declared a starvation strike to get an interview. Since my aim has been achieved I have signed the note." -----

"However I do not believe that I can survive even another month in the prison therefore I shall give you three days in which to complete your investigations. After that I shall again declare a dry starvation strike. I will continue it until I die or am released.

He tapped his finger on the table and stated:

"Citizen you could be executed for sabotage"

To which I replied:

"That is your privilege. I prefer a quick departure by execution or starvation to a slow biological death".

He said:

"Let us not argue about it now. You go with the guard and I will see what I can do".

So I left with the guard and returned to the room with 29 women, where I had been originally placed.





The matron showed me an empty bed - mine was already occupied. As soon as I lay down I began to feel the influence of the mood of the others - fear, anxiety and despair.

I came to the conclusion that fear of death was fear of the unknown. It was like the fear of a child approaching a dark room for the first time alone.

I opened my eyes as the 6 o'clock whistle announced the morning meal. The woman who had stolen the flour put a piece of sugar in my mouth. As it began to melt I felt energy returning to my body. I went and got a mug of coffee. I could not eat the bread.

The prisoners began to gather around me. They felt relieved that I had come back and had not been executed, but most of them were disappointed that I had not continued the strike demanding to be released.

At noon the Cheka man sent me a bottle of milk and half a pound of white bread. For the next three days I subsisted on this milk and bread and barley coffee. I did not feel hungry, only very tired. I slept a lot. I became indifferent and insensitive to the bed bugs and lice.

On the fourth day I sent another note to the Cheka Commissar. This time I declared a dry hunger strike, demanding to be released.

On the second day after my declaration I was returned to the same solitary cell.

I was glad to be left alone in the familiar dank room where I had relived my past for a whole week. Where I knew when a beam of the sun would strike the wall over my bed. Here I could be myself, undisturbed by the mood of the others.

It still seemed incredible that I was in a solitary cell ready for execution. However it seemed even more fantastic that apparently



the majority of Moscow's population had been in jail at some time or another during the past three years. It seemed unbelievable that most of the Russian people had become criminals.

So this was the result of war revolution and justice for all. It ruined the people, their personality and character.

In the second week of solitary confinement I tried to analyse the facts I had witnessed in my lifetime.

My hands became very thin, almost transparent. I remained in bed most of the time, getting up only when the low beam of the summer sun entered my cell.

At the end of the seventh day, just before dawn, a civilian and two guards entered.

The civilian was a doctor. He took my pulse, listened to my heart, looked at my eyes and hands.

Shaking his head he said:

"Citizen, it is time you stopped playing games. You will not last through the night unless you get help and nourishment. Stop the strike if you wish to live".

I explained I did not believe I would last in prison anyway so that the sooner I died the better.

He turned his back on me and walking through the door said:

"If you wish to die like a dog in this dank cell, it is your affair".

They left and I remained alone, waiting for the hour of my departure.

A golden sunbeam from the setting sun shone through the iron bars at my window. I rose from the lumpy straw mattress to watch

the majority of Moscow's population had been in jail at some time or another during the past three years. It seemed unbelievable that most of the Russian people had become criminals.

So this was the result of war, revolution and justice for all. It ruined the people, their personality and character.

During the <sup>second</sup> ~~previous~~ week of solitary confinement I had tried to analyse the facts I had witnessed in my life.

for the last time, dusk descending over earth.

Throughout my life I had often watched the change from day to night take place. Many beautiful moments, lovely fairy tales and legends were associated with this hour.

Now, apparently, for the last time I watched a few rose and violet clouds float slowly over the sky, edged in shades of gold and red.

This was goodbye to the majestic beauty of nature, my last goodbye to the world.

Supporting myself by the iron bars I watched for the last time light changing to darkness, the stars kindling in the sky.

When darkness surrounded the town and the sky became starry, I went back to bed.

For a long time I lay with my eyes closed, without any thoughts, just drifting through space.

When I opened my eyes again the mysterious, illusive light of the moon illuminated the room. A bright spot of light vibrated in the center of the floor. The cell seemed to be transformed into a bewitched, illusive place. Evil was concentrated in the dark, spreading shadows of the corners. As I watched the changes in the shapes and shades of the bright spot and shadows, an ancient legend came to my mind.

According to this legend, once a year, in the middle of the night a flower blooms in the deep wilderness of an impenetrable forest. The blossom is of indiscribable beauty. It emits multi-coloured beams. The life of this blossom is short - only a few hours.

One who managed to see this flower blooming would be kind of the world and all his wishes would be granted.

However, the plant grows in a bewitched land. It is guarded by witches, mermaids, dwarfs and many other spirits of the forest.

Anyone who would start in search of the flower must remember that Pan would always be near to inveigle the daring person into a swamp.

Anyone daring to start on the quest must be prepared to face the dark mystery of the forest night. He must expect to see witches grinding their long sharp teeth and mermaids smiling their cold, luring smiles. He could be lost in the harsh, eaten by the witches or torn up by beasts. Or, even worse than that, he could be transformed into another evil apparition.

Only a person of very high integrity who was brave, honest and placed his trust in God, could see the magic bloom.

Unexpectedly the meaning of the legend and its analogy to human life, came to me.

The dark forest stood for the jungle of our lives, its evil sprites were misery, ignorance and crime. The blooming flower represented the flower of knowledge; its radiant light - aesthetic appreciation of the universe. Through darkness and fire, ignorance and sickness, even through prison and war must we pass before we can reach the radiant light of Knowledge.

According to the legend, a man searching for the brilliant light of the flower, must be strong in spirit in order to overcome fear and face the unknown, then with a faith in God he could proceed directly to his goal.

Probably without any of these attributes, I had started across the dark forest in search of the radiant light. Presently I was surrounded by evil forces, since I had no faith in God, I had no

means of overcoming the evil spirits, therefore I must perish. As soon as I accepted the last statement, I subconsciously accepted the law of God. I closed my eyes and placed my left hand across my chest. Subconsciously I stretched my right hand in search of the hand of Jesus Christ who would lead me out of the thorny path to the road of the world of no return.

At that moment I heard the key turn in my door. It swung open and I saw three guards. One of them, with a lantern in his hand stepped in. He ordered me to come with them. Again we marched along the corridor and across the yard. This time our direction was opposite to that leading to the interrogation office. The night was still. The moon shone brightly. With one guard on either side of me and one behind, I was taken across a large prison yard, through a locked gate, across another large yard to a building all of whose windows had iron bars. In the bright moonlight I saw solitary prisoners standing at various windows. They waved to me as we passed. One of them blew me a kiss.

It looked as if they were saying a last goodbye to a comrade in trouble. I was sure I would be executed.

We passed through another guarded gate and entered a large courtyard surrounded by a high brick wall. There were no buildings here. We marched up to a double gate guarded by four men. One of my guards handed a paper to one of the men at the gate. The latter looked at it, then opened the gate. The two guards on either side of me took a step back. Now all three stood in a row behind me. One of them said "You may go now".

I asked him where I should go and he replied:

"Anywhere you wish. You are free".

I stood still, almost paralyzed. I could not understand the words I heard.

"Move, citizen, move"

The guard ordered.

I finally uttered:

"Where is my passport?"

"Come to the Cheka office next week and you will get it back.

Now move, citizen, move". He repeated.

Very slowly I stepped outside the gate. I expected to be shot in the back as an escapee, but no bullets came after me. I was in an alley. A long prison wall was on one side. High, large buildings with iron bars at the windows stood on the opposite side. Guards marched back and forth along side them. I turned to the right where I could see a cross street near by.

Expecting to be shot in the back at any moment I walked slowly towards the street. I reached the corner, there was no shooting.

It was a large street with large buildings. Guards were everywhere. I turned a cordern, walked another block, then turned a corner again, trying to get away from this Cheka area. Finally I reached a street where there were no guards.

The street was empty and I began to run, continually turning into other streets. When I got out of breath I stopped and then began to walk realising that I could be arrested for running along empty streets at night.

I walked slowly now, breathing in the night air of summer. I walked unthinking, still turning from one street into another. I was slightly drunk from the fresh air and the feeling that I was free.



Eventually I found myself on a sandy boulevard path. A row of maple trees stood on either side. The low moon cast their shadows onto the ground. It was very quiet. Only the leaves whispered moved by a light breeze.

Wooden benches were placed under the trees and suddenly feeling exhausted I sat down. The place seemed familiar. Something stirred in my mind. Apparently I had been here before with my grandmother. I search my memory and it finally came to me.

During one of our visits to Moscow, grandmother and I were on our way to the Agricultural Academy at Petrovsk-Rozumovsk - a small settlement which had grown up around the Academy. The only transportation from Moscow was a tiny local train known as the "Cuckoo" because of its peculiar whistle. To me, the ride on the train was a treat in itself.

We had missed it and had to wait for a couple of hours for its return from Petrovsk-Rasumovsk so my grandmother had taken me to this boulevard where she could sit on a bench while I played on the grass among the trees.

Grandmother had intended to visit Lissa Krasnova - a friend of my aunt Olga.

Lissa and Olga had grown up together and gone to the same school in Simbirsk. Lissa's parents were friends of my grandparents. Aliasha Lissa's oldest brother was a friend of my mother. Her younger brother Nicholas had been very tall and handsome. He used to dance with me at Christmas parties swinging me high in the air.

It was all so long ago, but I remembered warm affectionate Lisse. Her large blue eyes soft and caressing. She was near sighted and was in the habit of squinting.

I remembered the scandal and gossip in Simbirsk when Lissa unexpectedly married a student from the Agricultural Academy. Simbirsk

society was shocked that she had chosen a man without social standing, money or position. However her parents stood up for her. Her father Ivan Timofeevich declared that if Lissa had picked the man, he deserved to be picked, while her mother said that it was Lissa's life and she should make her own choice.

Lissa was studying languages at the University of Moscow when her first child was born. She left the baby, called Katherine, with her parents and continued her studies.

After my grandfather died my grandmother and I became frequent visitors of the Timofeevs. Their ~~home~~<sup>house</sup> became my second home. I loved it, the garden and little Katherine.

Ivan Timofeevich was from the Chuvash tribe, descendant of the Mongolian race. The tribe had its own characteristics and language, and was one of the poorest, most underprivileged in Russia.

Ivan Timofeevich's large family died from cholera when he was six years old. Vanka, as Ivan Timofeevich was called at that time, was the only survivor. The village placed him in his uncle's household. As the man was poor and had a large family of his own, he bitterly objected to feeding an extra brat.

Vanka ate the scraps off the plates. As the family was poor and hungry, there were not many 'left overs'. Vanka often fought neighboring dogs for food, nevertheless he was expected to do a man's work. He carried water from the river to the house, cut wood, set traps in the woods etc.

One day when Vanka was about ten years old he was sent to a Russian village on an errand. There was a church and a school in this village. Vanka entered the schoolroom and stayed all morning. Although the village was about three miles from his home, no amount

beating could keep him from going there.

A year later Vanka left his uncle and went to live in the Russian village so as to be closer. By this time he could read and write fluently.

He helped the priest's wife write letters for the peasants and helped the priest in the church. He earned his meals that way. He helped the schoolmaster keep the school clean and was allowed to sleep there. He was always running errands for the villagers and they gave him old clothes. Three years later he had completed his ~~studies~~ studies at the school. By that time Vanka had a great wish. He dreamed of building a school for the Chuvash children. He discussed his idea with the schoolmaster and the priest.

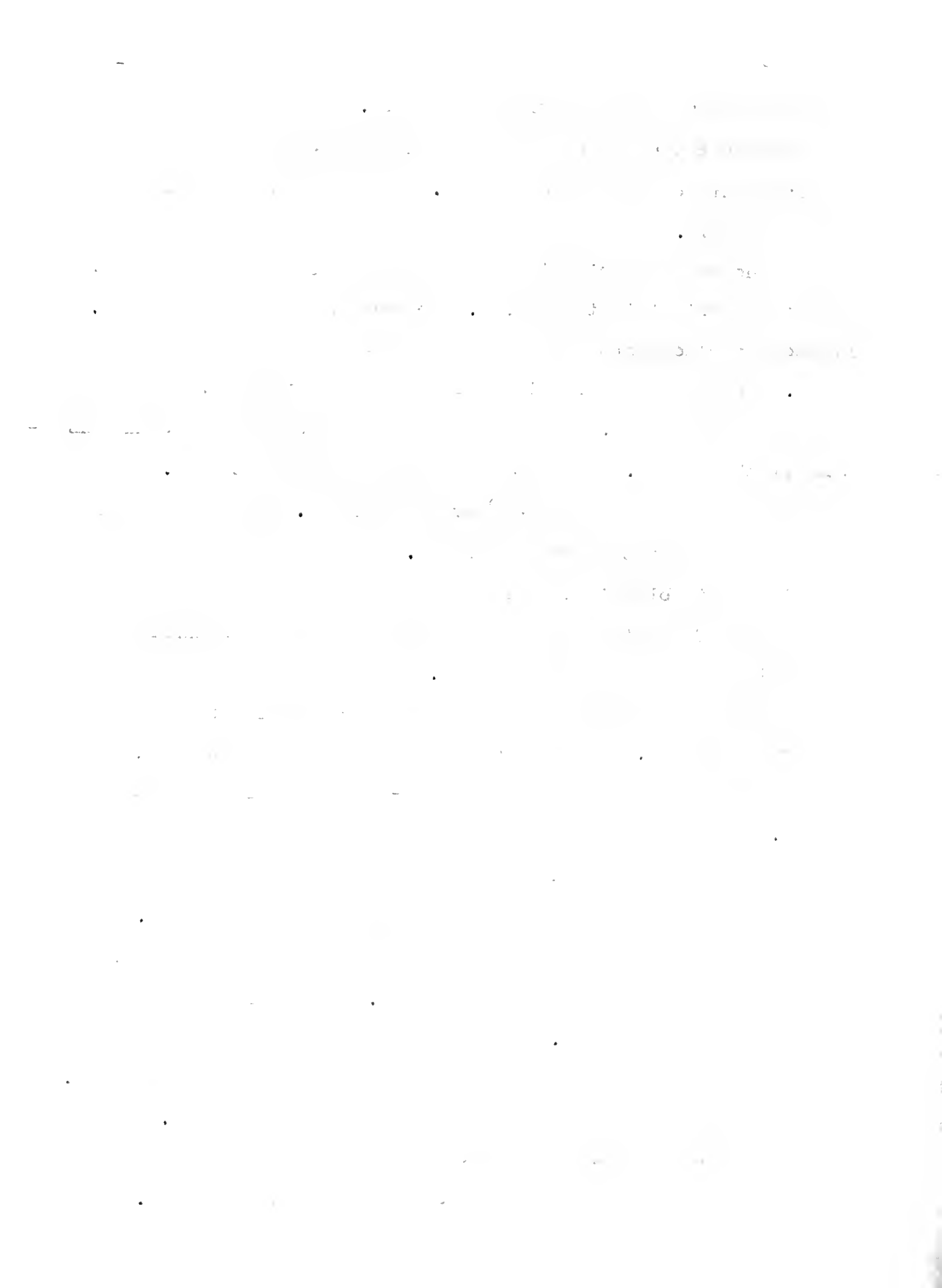
With their blessing, a trust in God and 15 kopeks in his pocket Vanka set off for the nearest town to complete his ~~studies~~ education and build a school for the Chuvash.

He managed to get through the grammar school and entered the Academy in Moscow. He had graduated and was on the way up, when he met and ~~married~~ <sup>Catherine</sup> Ekaterina Ale~~xe~~evna - daughter of a rich aristocratic family.

To ~~Ivan~~ <sup>Catherine Alexeevna</sup> Timofeevich, Ekaterina Alecseevna was a fairytale princess. To her, Ivan Timofeevich was a prince from an unknown land. <sup>Towards</sup>

After their marriage Ekaterina Alecseevna gave her dowery ~~to~~ the fulfillment of Ivan Timofeevich's dream. Together they built a school for the Chuvash children.

Ever since I could remember the school was well established. There were two dormitories and a church on the school premises. Ivan Timofeevich was a well known and respected citizen of Simbirsk noted for being the organizer and director of the Chuvash school. There were



many teachers at the school, yet Ivan Timofeevich and Catherine Alexeievna always remained in close contact with the children.

I had many friends among the Chuvash students. They all had the same goal: to graduate from the school, i.e. receive a teacher's certificate and then return to their native village to teach and build schools in the Chuvash region.

Sitting on the bench under a maple tree that night I longed for Simbirsk, the Chuvash school, Catherine Alexeievna and Ivan Timofeevich, but I had left Simbirsk so long ago. Times had changed. It was possible that the school no longer existed. Ivan Timofeevich had probably died. He was an old man when I had left. However, Lissa might still be here. She and aunt Olga had corresponded right up to the revolution. At that time Lissa's husband was a well known scientist and professor at the Agricultural Academy. They could still be at Petrovsk-Rosumovsk. In any case I would be able to obtain their address from the Academy.

Possibly Lissa had forgotten me, but I could stop and give her aunt Olga's regards.

I was so very tired.

A rose coloured line appeared on the horizon. The sparrows began to make a tremendous noise announcing daybreak. The "Cuckoo" gave it's peculiar whistle announcing it's departure for Petrovsk-Rosumovsk.

I decided it was time to move. If I followed the "Cuckoo" railway tracks I would reach Petrovsk-Rosumovsk.

I left the bench and went in search of Lissa.



The sun was high when I reached the first small settlement. My heart began to pound. I wondered whether Lissa was still here and how she would receive me. I could not see the academy and asked a pedestrian for directions only to find out that I had not reached Petrovsk-Rozumovsk. I was in a new settlement while my goal was another two miles ahead.

Strange how human energy works. When I had reached this settlement I felt I could not take another step, yet as soon as I found out that I had another two miles to go, I just carried on walking.

The sun was warm and I did not feel quite so cold.

When I finally reached Petrovsk-Rozumovsk I recognized the Academy and seeing a man standing on the door step asked him where I could find professor Krasnov.

He replied "This is Saturday. He is not here today. You might find him at home. Do you know where he lives now?"

As I shook my head he indicated the direction I had just come from and said "It is about two miles towards Moscow. He moved to a new settlement a few months ago. Follow this road, it will lead you to the "Cuckoo" station. Turn right, walk two blocks, then left. Professor Krasnov lives in that block, on the right side of the street. Anyone there will point the house out to you".

I turned back along the road I had just come.

As I walked I wondered whether I would ever find Lissa. I would have like to sit down and rest for a few minutes, but I was afraid I would be unable to get up again.

The sun was already on it's downward path when I reached the station, just as a train approached from the opposite direction. A boy about 11 and a girl about 17 left the train. They walked in

my direction holding hands. Apparently the girl was teasing the boy who laughed loudly and continuously. It was a pleasant sight, one I had not seen since I left Chita. They behaved like normal young people and children should. They showed neither fear nor anxiety.

The girl was tall, two dark braids of hair reached below her waist. Her cotton dress was clean and well starched. The boy was also clean. To me, this in itself was remarkable.

I stood resting, waiting for them. When they approached I asked if they knew where professor Krasnov lived.

The girl answered:

"Yes, just around the next corner. We are going that way. Would you like to come with us?"

I nodded and the boy stepped off the sidewalk giving me room to walk beside the girl. She enquired whether I was a friend or a student of professor Krasnoff's.

"Neither" I replied. My aunt was a friend of Mrs. Krasnov in Simbirsk. My grandparents were friends of her parents. When I was a little girl I loved their orchards and often played there. I also loved to play with Mrs. Krasnov's first baby, Katherine.

The girl smiled at me saying "I do not remember you, but I am sure mother will be glad to see you. I am Katherine Krasnov and this is Volodia, my brother. What is your name?"

Her smile was friendly and sincere. It seemed to me that I could feel the ice begin to melt inside me. I was relieved. At least Lissa's family was friendly.

We entered a bungalow with a wide verandah. Katherine left me in the front room and went in search of her mother.

The rest was like a dream. I heard rapid footsteps, a voice



calling "Lialia! Lialia Sharova! Where are you?" A woman embraced me, kissing my eyes, my forehead, my neck. She whispered "Darling, you have finally come back home to us. After all these long years you are home again".

"Wheredid you come from?"

"How long can you stay with us?"

"Nanny Masha" she called: "Come here, Lialia, the granddaughter of General Lenovski is back with us".

More rapid foodstops, more embraces and blessings.

I was floating through the air, back to the time when I had lived in Simbirsk and had been loved by everyone.

I heard my own voice explaining that I had been in prison for the past two months, asking whether I could stay over night.

The next thing I knew, I was eating a soft boiled egg, drinking hot tea with red wine. Lissa was sitting on the edge of the sofa carressing me. Then Nanny Masha was bathing me. She washed and cut my hair, whispering "Do not look at it honey, just close your eyes. I will get all the lice out of your hair in no time. Finally I was put to bed in the library.

The linnen sheets were cool and fresh. The window was left open and the evening breeze stirred the lace curtainsx lightly. Lissa was feeding me hot soup. My eyes closed and I drifted into oblivion.

Next morning through the window I saw Lissa burning my clothes. Clean underwear lay on the chair beside me. On the back of the chair hung a well starched, clean summer dress.

Thus a new day began in my life.

Nanny Masha brought me a cup of hot tea and a slice of freshly baked bread. It was delicious. Giving it to me Nanny Masha said:

"I have been saving two pounds of beef for a special occasion. I took it out of the ice house last night because your coming back to us is the occasion. We will celebrate it by a nice dinner. How would you like the meat prepared?"

As I hesitated she suggested "Polmony". (small, meat filled dumplings served in soup) She said that Katherine and Volodia had asked for them, but that she had replied it being my day the choice should be mine.

I told her the polmony would be wonderful provided she did not find preparing the dumplings too much work and everybody ~~lik~~ liked them.

Kissing me on the forehead she said: "Polmony it will be", and went off into the kitchen to prepare them.

I was left alone to search through my memories of Nanny Masha.

Nanny-Masha had been nurse to all the Timofieff babies. Since Nicholas, Lissa and aunt Olga were together from early babyhood and Alosha and mother from early childhood, nanny Masha had become nurse to them all. They were her children. When they grew up Nanny Masha remained with the Timofieffs, occasionally taking care of their friends' infants, patiently waiting for 'her' children to get married and have babies for her to take care of.

Mother was the first of the group to marry. However, to the great disappointment of Nanny Masha, immediately after the marriage mother left for Siberia.

It just happened that from the time of mother's departure for Siberia and her bringing me back to Simbirsk, Nanny Masha had no babies to look after.

She was still living with the Timofieffs and felt out of place and very lonely until mother put me in her arms.

Meeting me after all those years, Nanny Masha immediately referred

to that day in Simbirsk. She told me

"You had always been my lucky star. I have never forgotten the day Marguerite came unexpectedly from Siberia and put you in my arms. I had been so lonely for such a long time! You were such a small bundle, all the way from Siberia. You warmed my heart and brought luck. The babies began to arrive like mushrooms. You were two years old when Alesha had his first child, then his second one. After that Katherine arrived. I was back with the Timofeieffs again, taking care of her, and you came to see me so often and to play with Katherine and the school girls, it was just like the good old times when Lissa and Olga played together!"

Yes, I remembered Nanny-Masha. I really felt at home with her and Lissa.

My thoughts were interrupted by Lissa who seated herself on the edge of my bed and holding my hand began to talk about Simbirsk, the time we lived there, she as a young girl, I as a very little one.

We spoke of my grandparents and her parents. I learned that Mr. and Mrs. Timofeieff were both alive. He was now 95 years old, yet still active and director of the Chuvash School. The Communist government respected him as much as the Imperial one had.

We recalled many mutual friends and familiar places. This conversation united us and we quickly became reacquainted.

Gradually the topic changed to Lissa's personal life and to living conditions in Moscow.

In addition to Katherine Lissa had three more children. Volodia who was 11 years old; Anna seven and Mitia four.

Lissa said:

"I have such a beautiful family. I could be so happy. If only

I was not so hungry and cold."

"Throughout the winter we did not have enough wood to keep the house warm. We only had a fire in the kitchen and wore our overcoats in the house."

"It is summer now, but I am still cold"

She shivered and remained silent. I looked at her closely. Her face was very thin and peaked. There were many wrinkles under her eyes and she looked very tired.

Lissa was not old. She could not have been over 35.

She smiled and began to talk again:

"I really should not complain. We have more than many others. George - my husband, you remember him, has a priority ration card and receives a high salary. He is a well known scientist. I work at the international library as I know nine languages including Greek and Latin. I too have a priority card and a high salary".

"Out of my salary I manage to get two glasses of milk a day, one for Mitia and one for Anna. Our ration is mostly flour and potatoes - and not enough of them".

"Thanks to Nanny Masha we are still alive and united. She makes life so much easier. She keeps us clean and feeds us. She is economical and resourceful. She saves every drop of fat and renders it into soap. In the summer she picks stinging nettles and some other grass which she makes into soup. With Katherine and Volodia's help she has made a small vegetable garden this summer in our yard. She asked George to get the seedlings and sprouts from the peasants."

George often examines the peasants' fields and works very closely with them.

Now we have green onions and carrots in our diet. This is a

luxury! We will have tomatoes in the Fall".

"But even Nanny Masha with all her skill, experience and love can not change starch into protein".

"Last Christmas, my oldest brother Alesha brought us three pounds of beef. He joined the Communist party as soon as the revolution took place and almost broke father's heart".

"I can not criticize Alesha, he helps us so much. He was always politically minded and his outlook on life is different from our's".

"According to him it does not make much difference who rules the country provided the leaders are honest and educated in political economy. Alesha says he can do so much more for the country if he is at the top."

"It does not really matter. The fact is that Alesha brought us three pounds of beef last Christmas. Nanny Masha used two pounds for our Christmas dinner and saved a pound for my birthday, which as you know is on January 1st."

Nicholas my younger brother is not a communist, however he also succeeded in getting three pounds of beef for my birthday, so Nanny-Masha decided to save two pounds for a special occasion. I am so glad she did, now we can celebrate your arrival".

She pressed my hand and kissed me on the forehead.

I asked her what had happened to Russian produce, Russia had been a rich country.

She shrugged her shoulders as she replied

"I am not very well versed in political economy. As far as I can understand, both the war and the civil war which followed, affected both agriculture and industry very much. Fields and factories were neglected."

In overthrowing the old regime, the Communist government killed the motivation and enterprise of the individual in an economy which had been damaged already. Thus they destroyed the basic principle of the social system."

"After national production was taken over by the Communist Government ration cards were introduced for the distribution of manufactured goods. Banking became unnecessary. Although money had not actually been abolished, it became worthless as a result of continuous issues of paper currency. The balance between trade and exchange value was destroyed."

"Now the government is trying to introduce a type of bureaucratic system regulating trade and the production of manufactured goods. However, restoring the economy of a country is no easy task".

"During 1917, 1918 all the tillable and cultivated land was distributed to the peasants who became sole owners. However, during the war years the peasants had lost touch with the soil, their skill and ability to work was greatly reduced."

"The government's policy of confiscating the crops irritated the peasants. They refused to grow more than required for their personal needs. At present agricultural production is far below the level required to feed the nation."

"In addition for the past two years the country has suffered from drought and famine has spread throughout Russia".

"Livestock has been strongly affected by a shortage of food and the Communist policy of confiscating and distributing food on the ration card system has made the peasants indifferent to increasing their livestock. So it goes!"

Nanny-Masha interrupted our conversation announcing that dinner

would be ready in fifteen minutes.

The meal was lively and gay. Everyone received a soup plate full of pelmeny and everybody enjoyed it, especially Katherine and Volodia.

After dinner I went back to bed and slept until Lissa woke me with a cup of tea and a piece of bread. She sat beside me chattering about her daily life, world problems and progress in science. We discussed Einstein's new theory of relativity.

Finally she asked me whether I would like to tell her what had happened to me. She became very alarmed when she learned that I had to go back to the Cheka for my passport, and said that I must obtain a position with a government organization before I return to the Cheka.

I suggested the department of Education and mentioned my interview for the position of a Teacher-Observer.

She thought about the matter and decided that a position of this nature would be most appropriate since by its nature my assignments would last no more than six weeks so that I would always have an opportunity of resigning when ready to join the university. However she expected the vacancy in question would have been filled by now.

Then suddenly she exclaimed:

"Lialia! I know where there is a vacancy".

"Do you know that your aunt Elena - your father's oldest sister is in Moscow? She moved there when her estate was confiscated at the beginning of the revolution, and we became friends.

"I met her in the street only a few days ago when she told me she had just got a position as kitchen supervisor in a Children's Home. According to her the institution is not functioning yet. It is in the process of engaging the personnel. All these new Homes for

Children require a large number of Teacher-Observers".

"I shall talk to your aunt tomorrow and see what can be arranged".

I told Lissa that all I knew about Aunt Elena was that she lived alone on a large estate in a pine forest. Her nephews and nieces loved to stay with her through the summer holidays. She had so many relatives that I doubted if she was even aware of my existence.

Lissa kissed my forehead again and said that it did not matter. She knew Aunt Elena who was a grand old lady. Saying this Lissa left and I went back to sleep.

On the fourth morning after I left the prison, I boarded the Cuckoo train armed with Nanny Masha's pass and with Lissa as my escort. We were on our way to Moscow to meet my Aunt Elena and I was to be interviewed for the position of a Teacher Observer by the superintendent of the Children's Home.

The superintendent was a man about 35 years old. He was one of Aunt Elena's young friends and had spent many summers at her estate. My position as a Teacher-Observers was granted before the interview began.

This new Children's Home had been organized for children who had neither homes nor parents, who had learned from early childhood to provide for themselves. They usually lived around large markets where food could be easily obtained. They had learned very early that they could only exist if they stole or begged. Left to themselves they eventually would have grown up to be thieves at best, probably criminals.

Their ages were from six years old and up. Sometimes a boy of eight would be followed by a baby of four or five. So the boy of eight provided not only for himself but also for his younger brother or sister.



The Home was designed for children who were ~~wander~~ roaming the streets because their parents were either dead or had nothing to offer. Most of them had been on their own for a while. They had learned the meaning of freedom. No golden cage could attract them. They were outcasts and preferred to remain as such. They had no obligations to society.

I was given to understand that as soon as the Home was ready to function soldiers would be sent to the markets in pairs to capture the children and bring them to us - the Teacher Observers.

We were to study their habits and capabilities, classify their faults, demands and needs, then group them according to their character.

No more than five boys of approximately the same age would be under the supervision of a Teacher-Observer at one time, for a period of three hours daily. There were to be conferences between the Teacher-Observers of the same group and at the end of the observation period a complete character report on each child was to be submitted.

The project had priority rating so that the faculty and children received priority ration cards. They were supposed to live in the Home and eat in a communal dining room. In addition to board and lodging each member of the staff received a salary.

The work promised to be challenging and working conditions good. The Home was located in the grounds of an old convent which had been partially confiscated by the government.

According to the superintendent, immediately after the revolution red soldiers occupied all the large buildings forcing the nuns to double and triple up in their small cottages designed for two people.

Lately the buildings had been vacated and assigned to the Department of Education, but being overlooked had remained vacant until assigned

to the new Children's Home. The buildings were not exactly habitable. The heating system was out of order. Some of the windows were broken and there was no furniture. At the time of my interview the buildings were being reconditioned.

The superintendent's room, the office and kitchen quarters and the dining room were more or less repaired. The rest of the houses were yet to be repaired and furnished.

I learned that to date only two persons had been engaged as teachers. One was the wife of the supervisor of the grounds. A small nun's cottage for two had been assigned to her and her husband. The other teacher-observer was sharing with one of the office girls.

Aunt Elena had her room in one of the large buildings otherwise vacant and not yet fixed. She had her own furniture and suggested that I could move in with her. Although there was only one bed/<sup>in her room</sup>there were a few spare mattresses available but no beds. The grounds supervisor agreed to put one of these mattresses into Aunt Elena's room for me.

The superintendent then said that if I was willing to accept these conditions temporarily, I could be officially enrolled next morning.

I had no choice. In any event, temporary conditions of any kind would have been acceptable and if Aunt Elena was willing to share her privacy with me, I could only be grateful.

I spent the rest of the day with Lissa at the library.

We had barley coffee and home baked bread for lunch.

Lissa and I grew very close to each other during the few days I stayed with the Krasnovs.

She was the first person to understand my urge for knowledge, my coming to Russia to continue my education.

--At the end of the day I returned with Lissa to her home, to spend one more night under the Krasnoff roof.

That night everyone had a plate of stinging nettle soup with a quarter of a hard boiled egg in it and a slice of bread.

After dinner Professor Krasnov left for the Academy, Nanny-Masha took Ann and Mitia to bed, Katherine - who was attending summer school at the university- was studying, and Volodia was busy drawing.

Lissa and I sat out on the verandah. The night was warm and Lissa was sharing her troubles with me:

"Lialia! I do not know what to do about Mitia. He is four years old and should be going to the kindergarden in the Fall, but he has no boy's clothes. He wears Ann's dresses and coats. It is all right as long as he is in his own yard, but I would not dare to send him to school or out into the street in a girl's coat. Children are cruel. I fear they may mock and ridicule him".

"As Ann goes to school Mitia is mostly alone with Nanny Masha, he knows nothing but love."

"I have a ration card and go to the government store every day. It is practically empty, no clothes for children are available!"

I asked her whether she could obtain the things she needed on the black market to which she replied:

"I probably could exchange some of our things for clothing for Mitia on the black market, but I do not dare. There is so much sickness in the country - typhus, smallpox, diphtheria. Children are dying like flies. How would I know who had worn the clothes before I bought them?"

"Mitia is so small. He was born just after the revolution. He has never had enough food. I did not have enough milk to feed him.

His resistance is low. No, I would not dare to get second-hand clothes for Mitia".

"There are new clothes on the black market, but they are—priceless. They can only be exchanged for gold or silver coins. I do not have these".

She stopped talking and looked silently into the darkness.

Suddenly I remembered that I had two gold pieces stitched to the back of my baptismal cross.

"Lissa, would a five rouble gold piece help?" I asked.

"Would a five rouble gold piece help?" she repeated. "But I do not have a five rouble gold piece. However let me dream for a few minutes and plan what I could do with it."

"I would buy a winter coat and a pair of trousers for Mitia and winter boots for all three of them, - Mitia, Ann and Volodia. I would also get some yarn and knit mittens for everyone in the house including you."

"These are only dreams. What will I do if I am unable to buy winter boots for the children?"

"I know it is only June. It is silly to think about the winter, but it is so cold then! In another two months the rains will start to be followed by snow".

My heart was beating fast. I was practically in seventh heaven as I interrupted her:

"Lissa, listen to me. Your dream is coming true. I have two five rouble gold pieces which I will share with you. You take one and I will have the other."

She refused, but I had made up my mind. I told Lissa that she had no right to refuse. I was not giving it to her, but to her

children. I said that if she would not accept the coin it would mean that she did not want me to feel at home, I would leave and never return.

She immediately said:

"Oh no, not that. This is your home. You need to have one here in Russia. I will be delighted to use the coin".

She kissed me and we both went to bed.

Next morning I left the Krasnov residence and using Nanny-Masha's pass took the Cuckoo train to Moscow.

I went to the Cheka for my passport and had no difficulty there after giving my address and place of employment. I was informed that my suitcase had been left at Mr. Petroff's apartment and I picked it up on my way to the Children's Home which I reached around noon.

Aunt Elena was in the kitchen supervising the preparation of a meal. Giving me her key she said dinner would be served at 1 p.m. in the nun's mess hall.

As I entered her room I saw the mattress on the floor and lay down immediately. Suddenly I felt relaxed and exhausted.

At one o'clock I joined the rest of the employees of the Children's Home for our meal. I found a slice of bread at my place. The supervisor explained that every employee received 3.5 lbs of bread weekly which was usually distributed on Monday mornings. Since I had not been on the roll the previous Monday I would receive a slice of bread from the kitchen until the following Monday. I was also informed that in addition to this meal, tea or barley coffee were served between 7 and 8 a.m. and between 6 and 7 p.m.

The dinner consisted of a small bowl of beef and vegetable soup. It was very good, but the portions were no more than a tea cup. However

it was more than enough for me.

After dinner the superintendent asked me and the other two teacher-observers into his office.

He informed us that the home would be officially opened in six weeks. In the meantime we were expected to participate in the organizing of the Home, selecting suitable quarters for our duties, compiling a list of necessary equipment etc. We were also expected to submit a preliminary report on our proposed activities at the time the children arrived.

According to the superintendent this Home was in the experimental stage, it was not expected that many children would be brought in, probably no more than five during the first week, therefore three teacher-observers were considered sufficient to begin with. The number of teacher-observers and other staff members would be increased as the need arose.

Each small group of children would live with their appointed "Mother" in one of the larger nun's cottages or an apartment in one of the large buildings in the convent grounds.

The nuns were expected to participate in the work and although their duties were not defined, we could ask for their help in an emergency or in case of need. A nun could be asked to stay with a sick child for instance, be assigned overnight duties, etc.

At the end of the meeting the superintendent mentioned that the nuns held regular church services in the convent and asked us, as a personal favour to stay away from the church especially during the services, in order to avoid trouble.

Despite the last statement, I enjoyed our meeting. I liked the superintendent and my two co-workers. All of them were looking forward to their assignments. They were eager and hoped to be usef

I too was eager, however I felt very weak and tired. I hoped I would recover before the institution opened .

Strange as it may seem, my memories of Aunt Elena are very faint.

She was the oldest child in my father's family. At seventeen she married one of her cousins and went to live on an estate adjoining ~~our~~ our original family one. A large pine forest separated them from city life.

Her husband died early in life, they had no children and Elena was left alone to manage her large estate - which she did well, being a good organizer. She and the surrounding villagers prospered until the revolution struck.

At the age of 64 Aunt Elena was thrown out of her home and went to Moscow to try and earn a living. When I met her, she was 68, tall, thin, quiet and reserved.

I told her father had died. She said she was sorry. She remembered him as a boy, but he had been born after her marriage and they had not kept in touch after he left for Siberia.

Although we shared a room, there was very little communion between us. She did not confide in me, nor I in her. Of course the circumstances under which we lived helped. Actually we did not have many opportunities to communicate.

Aunt Elena usually left the room at 6 a.m. to prepare barley coffee for the staff. She returned after dinner for her afternoon rest and would leave for the kitchen again at 6 p.m. to return about 9 p.m.

I slept until 7.30 a.m. In the afternoons I had meetings with the other two teacher-observers, and in the evenings I went to sleep immediately after the meal, before Aunt Elena returned.

That first week at the children's home I felt so exhausted that

slept at every opportunity and every free moment. The short walk between my room and the mess was very difficult for me. After dinner-which regularly consisted of a cup of soup and a slice of bread, I felt as if I had spent long hours at heavy labour.

This continuous exhaustion depressed my ~~morale~~ spirits and lowered my morale. Furthermore two additional conditions developed which dismayed me completely.

Firstly, the lice returned. They are not easy to get rid of. Nanny-Masha had removed the majority, but I had large sores on my head, in my armpits and between my legs where the nits remained, hatched and spread rapidly.

There were no bathing facilities for the staff on the grounds. I had no soap and no means of getting rid of the lice.

Most of the employees were either Moscow born or residents of long standing, they had been there all through the revolution and had adjusted to the conditions. They knew all the ins and outs, and most had homes outside the place where they worked. The majority were more or less clean and had no lice which made me self-conscious and placed me apart.

The other condition was no less alarming. I began to lose control of my bladder. Every time I became excited, sneezed, coughed or laughed I wet myself. At night, to keep the mattress dry, I would quickly roll off onto the floor. I had no more than a seconds warning.

This was my physical state at the end of my first week in the Children's Home.

At the beginning of the second week 200 children were unexpectedly brought to the institution.

These were not children from the markets. They were orphans from



Samara a town in a county struck by famine. Due to the food shortage the orphanage there was closed and the children distributed among orphanages in other counties.

This group of youngsters between 6 and 13 years of age had been sent to Moscow - the capital of Russia, the richest and best organized city in the country.

How and where the error occurred nobody knew. There was no record of the children's transfer to Moscow. There were no vacancies in any of the orphanages in Moscow. All the Children's Homes were filled to capacity. Our's was the only one available.

The newcomers were clean and neat. Their clothes nicely patched, but they all had large dark shadows under their eyes. They were all pale and thin. Most of them had infected nails and abscesses between their fingers. It was obvious at a glance that these children were undernourished.

Later we learned from the youngsters that they had fought hard against starvation. The previous winter all the chairs at their orphanage had been taken to the black market one by one to be exchanged for food. The large tables had been chopped up for firewood to prepare food in the kitchen and for warming the recreation hall. The rest of the building was unheated. They spent their days in the hall, but slept in the cold rooms. They sat on the floor and meals were served on trays.

As soon as the snow melted the children went out into the fields with their teachers to pick grass for food. When the grass dried up because of a lack of rain, the superintendent decided to close the orphanage and send the children to other counties.

To most of these youngsters the orphanage was the only home they

ever knew. However the oldest remembered pre-revolutionary times; Christmas and Easter celebrations - the sweets and the presents. They remembered May day - the rowing boats on the Volga and the picnics on the shore.

We learned that the orphanage had a sewing room for the girls and a workshop for the boys. They had all been taught to read and write. They had a choir and danced on Sundays. They loved their home and the teachers.

But let us return to that unforgettable day when 200 youngsters were unexpectedly delivered at the convent door.

We had plenty of space at the Children's Home but neither food, equipment nor staff to care for 200 inmates. There were just three of us, teacher-observers.

The superintendent told us that the children had stayed at the railway station all day and had been fed there, while the teacher who accompanied them to Moscow had spent the day at the Department of Education trying to place the group.

He only had a 'one day' railroad pass from Samara to Moscow and back. Finally late in the day the children were taken off his hands, he left for Samara and the children were brought to us. It was about 7 p.m. when they arrived, so that the problem of feeding them did not come up that night.

We were informed by the superintendent that bread for the children breakfast would be delivered by 8 a.m. next morning.

Our immediate problem was to find suitable sleeping quarters and put the youngsters to bed.

We chose the nuns ceremonial hall for this purpose, a beautiful room with parquet flooring, heavy oak doors and beautiful carving. The

room occupied almost the entire second floor of one of the large buildings. There was only a small entrance at one end and a lavatory at the other.

Apparently the nuns were very proud of this room and after the soldiers left they polished the floor and woodwork and kept the room clean although it no longer belonged to them. It was unoccupied and unfurnished.

There were no beds, sheets or pillows in the grounds. However, to our joy the supervisor reported there were mattresses and army blankets in a store room. The mattresses were laid on the floor, each child was issued with a blanket. We placed them in two rows, the girls on one side, the boys on the other side of the room.

The youngsters were hungry and tired. They were homesick and dreadfully disappointed, but they were glad to lie down. Most of the girls cried. We hoped they would cry themselves to sleep.

Our next task was to get a nun to stay with them through the night. We hoped she would bring a light with her as the supervisor of the grounds, although he understood our reluctance to leave the children in the dark, explained there was nothing he could do about it. There were no lamps or fuel in the store room.

Small kerosene lamps were our only means of illumination in the grounds and the ration of oil extremely small. The staff lamps were filled once a week with sufficient fuel to burn for two hours only. The nuns were our only hope.

Apparently they had no shortage. Their small cottages were always lit up at night. Votive lights burned continuously night and day in the church, one of these would give the children a sense of security. We were certain the nuns would not refuse to give light to

the orphans.

Natalia Petrovna the unmarried teacher-observer, volunteered to stay with the children while Lidia Ivanovna - the other teacher-observer and I went to see the Mother Superior.

Her welcome was far from warm. It was about 9 p.m. and she did not like being disturbed at that hour, but she did promise to see if there was a volunteer among the nuns for night duty.

On our way out we mentioned the light to which the Mother Superior replied immediately:

"We do not have fuel to spare. Your government confiscated our wealth and our land. You are occupying our buildings, we have no obligations to you. You can not expect us to stay in the dark with two hundred children. Provide the light and I will send a nun for night duty. Please do not disturb me after 10 p.m."

The interview was over. We realised that the nuns considered us their enemies. We could expect no help from them.

We returned in semi-darkness. Most of the children were asleep, only a few of the older girls were still sobbing.

I suggested taking turns watching the children through the night, but Lidia Ivanovna, who was older than Natalia Petrovna or I, objected. She said she knew children better than we did. They would need us much more the next day than at night. As we had no equipment, we would have to rely on our wits to keep the children occupied. We would have to be alert and resourceful and could not afford to lose a night's sleep. She said the best we could do was to lock both the room and the ~~store~~ building leaving the key under a stone near the door. We would rejoin the children at six o'clock in the morning.

So we locked the children up and went to bed.

Next morning I was up at 5.30. I approached the building at a quarter to six just as Natalia Petrovna was unlocking the door. Lidia Ivanovna joined us as we entered.

Some of the youngsters were still asleep, others were lying quietly. We soon discovered that most of the mattresses were wet. The children were ashamed and disgusted. They were not used to wetting their beds, but they were frightened during the night and could not find the lavatory.

With help from the oldest children we hung the mattresses out of the windows to dry.

By 8 a.m. all the children were brushed and dressed. We paired them off and marched to the mess for breakfast where we discovered that the bread had not yet been delivered.

The superintendent suggested that we postpone serving the barley coffee until the bread arrived because the breakfast ration was supposed to be a mug of coffee and a slice of bread.

We dismissed the youngsters and let them stay outside pending the delivery of rations.

It was a nice warm morning, the nuns' part of the grounds looked beautiful. Small cottages nestled among blooming bushes and flowers. The paths were covered with soft, yellow sand.

Our part of the grounds was mostly paved.

The children settled down sitting along the buildings with their backs to the walls. We got out our notebooks and began to take down their names, ages and other particulars.

Some of them were crying because they were hungry and asked for food. The older ones asked to be sent back to Samara. They did not trust us. There was no rapport between us.

The bread arrived at 11 a.m.

A vehicle stopped in front of the gate, a man stepped out and called to the children:

"Bread is here. Come and get it".

We never had a chance to make the children queue up. They rushed towards the vehicle pushing, falling, bruising knees and elbows. Finally the bread was distributed, each child receiving his daily ration of one slice, about 1" thick, 3" x 5" square.

Because of the delay in breakfast, our dinner also was served late. By the time the soup was issued the children had no bread left. They gulped the small bowls of soup down and were still hungry.

We did not see the superintendent until late that night. When we met he was tired and discouraged. He had spent all day at the Department of Education trying to get us help and supplies, but in vain.

He was finally told that as the children were only staying temporarily at his institution and would be transferred at the earliest opportunity, no equipment would be delivered for the time being, nor could he expect an increase in the personnel.

We learned that the daily bread ration for the children would be delivered at 8 a.m. every morning and distributed to the children direct by the delivery man.

He asked us to make the best of things while he would continue his efforts to get supplies as soon as possible. A week slipped by no equipment was forthcoming and no help arrived.

Meanwhile another group of youngsters was delivered at the convent gates. They had come from the town of Sizran in another county struck by famine. Here were another 189 hungry, undernourished children between the ages of six and fifteen.

That night we left all the girls in the ceremonial hall and put the boys in a large hall of another vacant building.

The memory of my employment at the Children's Home is like an ugly nightmare.

All of us, including the children were on edge.

They bitterly resented their transfer to Moscow wanting to go home, and objected to sleeping on bare mattresses on the floor locked up in a dark room of an empty building.

They rebelled when we forbade them to go to the church services held daily by the nuns.

Bread was delivered each day between 8 a.m. and noon. The hours of expectation seemed extremely long. The children would sit with their backs to the wall chanting in chorus "We are hungry, give us bread; we are hungry, give us bread". This went on ceaselessly until the bread arrived.

Their thin voices and small starved faces tore my heart to shreds. Under the pressure of obligations and duties, I forgot I was tired, could not control my bladder and was continuously wet.

We rose at 5.30 a.m. staying with our charges until dark. In vain we tried to reach them, they rejected us. They had left their home assured that in Moscow they would have better food, better schools and better opportunities. It did not turn out that way. The children felt they had been cheated and blamed us.

At the end of August the superintendent announced unexpectedly that our institution was to change its function. It was to be renamed an Orphanage and the children would remain in the convent grounds permanently. Remodelling of the buildings would begin next day while supplies and equipment would be delivered by the end of the week.

The hiring of additional staff would be completed in two weeks and the children would be educated. Teachers would begin classes on September 1st.

The crisis appeared to be over. It was time for me to hand in my resignation and transfer to a university for the completion of my own education.

I had no difficulty. Officially I could leave in two weeks time. The superintendent told me that as soon as the new personnel began to arrive I could take time off to attend to my personal affairs and rest.

I received 300 paper rubles for my services.

Aunt Elena suggested that I should go to the black market and get a pair of shoes. She doubted I could get a new pair for 300 rubles. However, she said:

"Any half-worn second hand shoes would be better than what you have on. Even the children ask why you wear those decorations on your feet".

I could not suppress a smile. The remark was sharp and to the point. The soles of my so called "sports boots" were completely gone, only the run down heels remained. As the toe caps were made of coarse leather they had kept their shape and supported the tips of my toes.

When I told Aunt Elena I had a five rouble gold piece, she replied:

"For God's sake go to the black market and get yourself a pair of shoes, overshoes and two pairs of wollen stockings, otherwise you will have frozen feet in the winter. Ask Natalia Petrovna to come with you, she is a native of Moscow and knows her way around".



I followed her advice, and a week later when the new teachers began to arrive Natalia Petrovna and I took a day off and went to the black market.

For the five rouble gold coin I got a new pair of boots, a pair of low overshoes, two pairs of wollen stockings, a bar of soap and a hundred paper roubles in change. That brought my capital up to 400 paper roubles. I felt like a millionaire.

On our way back we took a short cut and at about 3 pm approached the convent from a side alley. At a small hidden gate leading to the convent the nuns were buying milk from a woman at 10 paper roubles a mug. It was warm curd, slightly reddish brown in tint with golden specks floating in it. I was unable to resist the temptation and brought two mugs, one for Natalia Petrovna and one for myself. Since we had no mugs with us we drank it right there at the gate from mugs provided by the tradeswoman. It was delicious.

Energy seemed to flow into me with each swallow of the rich warm liquid. Suddenly I felt like a cat ready to purr - relaxed and sleepy. I dropped off to sleep as soon as I reached my mattress.

For the next few days I would go to the hidden gate at 3 p.m. carrying a mug to buy milk.

I shared it with Aunt Elona. She usually divided her portion into three and used it in her tea. I enjoyed watching her pleasure in sipping the milky tea.

I was much more extravagant and drank the milk all at one time accompanied by a slice of bread.

In the beginning of September I went to the Department of Education to enrol in a university. There I learned that there were no vacancies in Moscow's schools of higher education, however, I

could go to the Institute of Technology at Ivano-Vosnesensk, a small town about 200 miles north-east of Moscow.

I accepted the offer. I had had enough of Moscow and was glad to move to another town in another county of Russia.

Before leaving Moscow I went to the library to see Lissa, she was sorry she had not been able to see me before, but Mitia had measles and she had been in <sup>quarantine</sup> ~~quarantine~~ with him for the past six weeks.

She also regretted that I was leaving.

She said:

"Lialis, you can not exist on student rations only. Here, I could easily get you a part time job at the office with some professor, if not at the university, then certainly at the Agricultural Academy. At the Institute of Technology at Ivano-Vosnesensk I have no connections, however when a thing must be done it can be done. I will find someone who does have connections, but it may take time".

As a farewell Lissa treated me to a cup of barley coffee and a French roll from a nearby bakery. Those small rolls cost 5 roubles each.

Next morning I left for Ivano-Vosnesensk having a third class pass for a passenger train.

At noon we stopped at a small station. A two hour stop-over was announced. Through the window I could see first class passengers and red soldiers leaving the train, all heading towards a small alley past the station. A woman looking through the same window said:

"There go the current millionaires to eat at a black market restaurant".

I was not a millionaire, but I had 300 paper roubles, and today I was going to eat. I needed energy to help me adjust to a new place.

I followed the soldiers to a small gate in a high wooden fence.

The house stood in the center of the yard, we had come through the back gate.

I sat at a small table and received a plateful of borsch with meat in it and a slice of black bread. The cost was 50 roubles.

At about 4 p.m. the train reached Ivanovo-Vosnesensk.

Seasonal rains began that morning. It was drizzling, the sky was dark, the streets muddy. It was chilly and damp.

High wooden fences stretched continuously along the street. Only the tops of two-storied wooden houses were visible. The sidewalks were narrow and also made of wood.

My living accommodation in the students' dormitory had been assigned to me in Moscow.

The women's dormitory was on the second floor of a wooden house. The staircase was dark and narrow. A corridor stretched the length of the building with a row of windows on one side and a row of doors on the other. Stoves for heating were let into the walls. They were fired by wood from the corridor and each serviced two adjoining rooms. They would not be lit until snow covered the ground.

I was placed in a room with four other girls. They were not very friendly. I was unsuccessful in my attempt to start a conversation because my accent was slightly different. They were daughters of workers who grew during the war years and matured during the revolution. They were suspicious and uncommunicative.

I had not expected such a reception from fellow students and was very disappointed and shocked.

All I found out from them was that the communal dining room and kitchen were on the first floor. That every student had an individual ration card and prepared her own meals. I also learned that I would

not receive my ration card before Monday. This was Friday.

Since I had had one big meal that day at the station, I went to bed immediately and hoped for a better tomorrow.

My hopes proved to be in vain. I wet my mattress that night. The bed was high and I had not had time to jump down. The girls found this out in the morning. They did not approved, nor could I blame them. They also noticed that I had lice and did not approve of this either. I realized they were right, but there was nothing I could do.

The sky was gray but it had stopped drizzling and since I still had 250 paper roubles I decided to go to the black market for breakfast

A piece of pie filled with mushrooms and onions and a cup of barley coffee cost me 15 roubles. I bought a smoked herring for 20 roubles and half a pound of black bread for 30 roubles.

On my way back I registered at the Institute and stopped at the students book store where I purchased a notebook and pencil for a hundred ruble.

I was informed that classes would begin on Monday morning and that I could get my ration card on Monday afternoon.

The town was hilly and the distances long. Our dormitory was on a hill on one side of the town, while the institute was on another hill on the opposite side. When I got back I was exhausted and discouraged. None of the people I had met that day had any enthusiasm or energy. Everyone looked tired and grim. I lay down and went to sleep.

In the evening I cut the herring into five and asked the girls to share it with me. They refused and became even more suspicious and less communicative.

When they went to the kitchen, I followed. It was roony with a

large wood burning cook stove .

A row of long tables and benches occupied the center of the room. A large samovar was boiling on a side table. Some of the girls were preparing vegetable soup, others were cooking buckwheat gruel or boiled potatoes. There was no meat, milk products or eggs. I was the only one who had a herring. The students looked at it with envy and suspicion.

There was very little conversation in the kitchen. No student discussions during the meal, no laughter or singsong. Everyone washed their own dishes and solemnly went to their own rooms.

Everybody went to bed early. Although I slept lightly afraid of wetting the bed, I did it again.

My physical condition had not improved during my stay at the Children's Home, as I had hoped. However working conditions were so strenuous I had no time to think about it. I had to keep on my feet and be alert. Here, at least temporarily, the pressure had been removed. I felt exhausted and hungry.

The next day was Sunday, I slept all day.

Monday I went to classes, however my mind was not there. I fell asleep in the middle of a lecture. Nobody woke me up. Many of the students had gone to sleep. The lecture was not very interesting. The professor was tired and discouraged.

In the afternoon I went to get my ration card and weekly food allowance. Since I had newly arrived I did not belong to the Communist party, none of my relatives were in the Red army and one belonged to the Communist party I received a third rank ration card.

My first week's ration consisted of a pound of black bread and a bag of vegetables containing three carrots, one onion and one

cucumber.

My university life had finally begun.

As time went on my relations with the other girls became unbearable. They boycotted me. They often passed sarcastic remarks about me, but never talked to me.

Accidentally I found out that there was a vacant room at the end of the corridor. I asked the supervisor if I could move in.

He said "It is a room for two. However being a corner room it is very cold and in addition one of the windows is broken. It is impossible to have it repaired at present, but if you wish, you may move in."

I did so, preferring the broken window and fresh air to the company of the girls.

A month passed by, snow covered the ground and my room became very cold. My weekly ration remained the same, a pound of bread, a few vegetables such as potato, carrot or turnip - four or five pieces in all.

My physical condition did not improve. I had lost control of my bladder completely. I carried a newspaper to lectures with me. I would place it on the chair and raise my skirt keeping it dry that way. I was always the last to leave the classroom. When I left a wet newspaper would remain in the chair. My legs were chapped from the knees up. The distance between the Institute and the dormitory seemed to grow longer every day. I frequently skidded on the icy sidewalks, bruised my elbows and made a bloody mess of my knees.

In the middle of November I had a letter from Lissa. She had found a professor at the Institute who needed help in his office. I went to see him and found that my job would be to cut out

photographs of agricultural machinery from American journals and paste them into an album. At the end of the month I would get 400 roubles and could adjust working hours to my schedule. So at the end of the month my diet would increase by a daily glass of milk at least.

At the same time Nadia moved into my room and brightened up my existence. She had been late coming to school.

Nadia was the daughter of an ex-millionaire merchant. Like everyone else he had lost most of his millions during the revolution, however, Nadia said that their gold and jewelry were buried in time.

She had lived with her parents in a large old house owned by her grandparents and ruled by her grandmother. It was a tradition in Old Russia's merchant class that the woman's place was in the home. Girls were married, by arrangements made between the parents of the bride and groom.

Although Nadia had had a good education, she also knew how to cook and keep house. She knew how to bake bread, scrub floors and wash windows. She also belonged to the new generation. She had her own will and her grandmother's chin.

She chose a local boy for her husband and fought hard for her independence. Finally she won her grandmother's blessing and married her beloved.

She and Basil her husband, came to Ivano-Voinosensk together. Basil to join the Institute of Technology and Nadia to enrol in the Teacher's College.

Nadia was very happy. She had overcome her grandmother's domination and had freed herself from the old class traditions. She was ready to fight for her own nest and its survival. She did not expect a bed of roses, there was hardship everywhere. Her goal in

was simple - to have a large family and keep it happy together. With trust in God and faith in herself and her beloved, Nadia was ready to battle for their existence.

Basil boarded up the broken window with cardboard and newspapers. The temperature in the room became bearable. He lived in the men's dormitory across the street, but spent most of his free time with us. The three of us quickly became good friends and usually had our barley coffee together in the afternoons. In the evenings we crowded together on one bed snuggling under blankets for warmth. We studied or freely discussed world problems, current conditions and the government.

Nadia and Basil were the warm rays of sunshine in the cold room.

Nadia also explained that at the beginning of the year my ration card should be changed to one of second rank. It would not be much of an improvement but still better than the third she declared. So the future looked a little brighter to me.

If I could just keep on going for another month or two I would be able to overcome my physical weakness and get rid of the lice. I would really be able to get out of these dark woods and back onto the open road where I <sup>could</sup> ~~would like to~~ look around me and start my search for the unknown once again.

In the meantime Nadia and Basil gave me their moral support.

It was December 15th, the day I was to receive my first pay. I was on the way to the office thinking about what I should do with the 400 rubles. I decided that on my way back I would stop at the black market and buy a smoked herring to celebrate with Nadia and Basil the turn in my economic condition.

The day was very cold and bright, as usual I slipped on the hill and went down on all fours bruising my hands and knees. AS I



struggled to rise I felt warm urine pouring between my legs as from a faucet. A peasant who was behind me began to curse

"Damn you you shameless bitch! I skelped my three year old girl for his. She could not sit down for a week. Is there no one to take a belt to you, to teach you? You carrion should not be allowed in public places. You dirty skunk, you so and so ....."

He continued to rant as I walked up the hill. There were others on the street. Both men and women crowded around the peasant curious to hear what it was all about. He pointed his finger at me while he explained, and some of the crowd laughed, others swore. The scene seemed so ridiculous to me that I began to giggle!

I was still giggling when I entered the office.

The professor asked whether I would like to share the joke with him, and the very thought of sharing the incident with him brought on another spasm of laughter. I laughed and laughed and could not stop.

The professor put a glass of water on the table in front of me, then saying he would be back in fifteen minutes he left the room. I was still laughing when he returned.

He put a few drops of medicine in a small glass of water and gave it to me, then he left the room again. When he came in for the second time I had become quite composed and apologized for the scene. He said that it did not matter, but that he thought I was ill and had made an appointment for me at the Institute hospital. I was to see a doctor in half an hour.

He paid me my wages and said he would see me the following week. I left the office and went to keep my appointment.

After a thorough physical examination the doctor told me I was suffering from malnutrition and acute anaemia, I had no resistance and was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He asked how I had got into

this condition.

I replied that it was probably the time I spent in prison that was responsible, whereupon a sarcastic smile hovered on his lips as he said:

"Most of the population of Russia has been to prison at some time or another in the past four years. If every one reacted the way you did, Russia would be a mad house. Yet, as you should know, all the federal agencies are functioning. Progress can be seen everywhere. Everybody in the country is employed and working.

Yet you, after a couple of months in prison are a physical wreck. You are living on borrowed time simply because you are too highly strung to die. This is the trouble with Russian Imperial intelligencia. They were very interesting individuals as long as they had someone to serve them hand and foot, but they have no guts. A little hardship and they go to pieces. You should not have left your home. Your place is hiding behind your mother's skirts.

Russia has no need for people like you. I can not allow you to remain at the Institute. You are in no condition to do any work. To let you remain would mean allowing you to receive a student's ration card under false pretences. I shall recommend that you be sent home to recover".

I interrupted him saying that my home was in Harbin, Manchuria and the border was closed. No one was allowed to cross it.

He shrugged his shoulders in annoyance saying "You do not realize there is no place in Russia where you could rest or obtain good food which is essential for your recovery. I am giving you an opportunity to escape from Russia.

"You really have no choice. If I were you, I would try to get to Chita and then cross the border on foot. Many others have done so

and are still doing it. You have nothing to lose. If you remain here you will either die or be put in a sanatorium from which there will be no escape.

Come to the office on Monday and you will have the recommendation to be sent home for recover. You may then act accordingly."

The interview was over.

I was completely bewildered.

Since leaving Harbin it had never occurred to me that I could go back. I went to Russia not because I thought the country needed me, but because it was the only one that promised free higher education. I had gone to Russia in search of an understanding of the universe. I had left Harbin to escape a life of "Wine, women and song".

It was not the schools of higher education in Russia that had broadened my horizon.

From the moment I left Harbin I had entered the school of highest education there is - "The School of Life". I had bitten deeply into Eve's apple of knowledge and the taste was bitter.

These thoughts passed through my mind as I walked back to the dormitory along the ugly streets of an unfriendly, unfamiliar town. I realized I was very very tired. It would be nice to rest among the familiar elm trees in the park which had been my refuge for so many years. I would like to lie there again listening to their whispers and gossip.

I had reached another cross road and had been given my direction. I had no choice but to go back to Harbin where I could rest, compose my thoughts and analyse my experiences.

How I was to get there I did not know. The border was closed, a long and difficult journey lay ahead.

I did not stop at the black market for herring that day. I was too overcome by my interview with the doctor.

When I described the incident to Nadia that evening, it seemed quite incredible and fantastic. How could ~~x~~ a thing like that have happened to me? I began to giggle again.

Nadia did not laugh with me. She said

"You know, Lialia, this would be tragic, were it not for the fact that you will get a permit to return to Manchuria. This is your chance to escape from Russia".

I asked her whether she would like to leave Russia and to to another country.

She silent for a little while, then replied:-

"I do not know, I have never thought about it. However, it is different for me. I was born in an old house in a small town not far from here. My brothers and sisters, my father and his father and his grandfather before him, were all borne there. It is my heritage. My diamonds are buried in the grounds of the house. Until I came to Ivano-Vosnesensk, I had never left my native town."

"On my eighteenth birthday my mother was supposed to take me to Moscow to ~~introduce me~~ <sup>introduce me</sup> to the Merchants' Society there. I expected to spend the winter season with my brother. However, it was the year of the revolution and I ~~did~~ did not go to Moscow."

"One of my brothers was killed, another sentenced to 25 years hard labour in Siberia. My father was taken to prison. We did not know whether he would be executed, or sent to Siberia. We did not expect to see him again, but a year later he came back."

"Our fur store in Moscow was confiscated. The house was searched many times and our valuables taken. These searches were nerve breaking.

"It is these difficult times that knit the family closer than ever before. It is true that my grandmother is a trying domineering old woman, but she is my grandmother and deep down I love her. I know she loves me."

"This is my country. Here the customs and people are familiar. This is my life and I do not know any other."

"My roots are deep in this soil. These are difficult times, but I shall try to adjust to the new life and the new traditions, here in this country where I was born and which I love!"

"I do not have that spirit of adventure which would lead me to seek another life in another country".

"Your circumstances are entirely different. What are you doing here anyway? You must have realised by now that no higher education, no special mental or spiritual development can be obtained in Russia at present. Our problem is self-preservation and survival. I do not think that it is yours. You do not care whether you live or die. You are "In search of the Unknown". You will not find it here now, so any other country would be better for you than Russia. You should rejoice and make every effort to escape. You have got your chance, take advantage of it".

This was Nadia, always thoughtful, always sensible.

Her advice was good and I was ready to take it.



Instead of attending classes on Monday morning I went to the Professor's office to complete the work I had left undone on Saturday. He had already heard from the doctor and suggested that I contact the Department of Transportation in Moscow as soon as possible. He also offered to send me to the library in Moscow on a short assignment in connection with his work which would give me an opportunity of going to the department myself.

Although I did not believe I would get a pass to Manchuria as the border was closed, I accepted his offer. I wanted to go to Moscow to discuss the latest developments with Lissa.

The professor said he would get me travelling pass to Moscow for next morning, one that would be good for a week. Should I wish to return on any day within that period I would be able to do so.

That afternoon I obtained a letter from the doctor; went to the black market where I bought two pounds of beef for 100 roubles for Nanny Masha, then picked up my weekly ration.

Next morning I left for Moscow.

I went to see Lissa in the library directly I got off the train. Upon hearing my story she reacted in the same way as Nadia and the professor. It was wonderful that I could return to Harbin.

I cooled off her enthusiasm by reminding her that the border was closed and that had passes to Manchuria been so easy to obtain the girls in Tomsk would have been home long ago. Furthermore had there been some method of getting across the border I would not have been in Moscow now. The head of the Department of Education in Chita would have sent us all back to Harbin.

To this announcement Lissa replied:

"Listen dear, this is only the beginning. If there is no legal

way for you to cross the border, we will find some other means. Although all the churches in Moscow are closed, remember 'God has many ways'."

"Tomorrow go to the Department of Transportation and see what reply you get to your petition. If it is negative, we will act on our own. You must stay with us, it is your home".

I spent the rest of the day at the library looking up the references the professor needed. In the evening I went home with Lissa. It was very nice to be among friends.

I gave my ration to Nanna Masha and the two pounds of beef. She was delighted although she scolded me <sup>for my</sup> ~~for my~~ extravagance. She said she would serve pelmeni the following night as it was the children's favourite dish.

I asked Lissa to allow me to sleep on the floor because of my physical weakness to which she replied:

"Don't worry, ~~tell~~ Nanna Masha and she will fix you up"

Nanna Masha found a rubber sheet and put a chamber pot beside the couch. Strangely enough I did not wet my bed that night.

In the morning I went to the Department of Transportation, filed a petition for a pass to Harbin and was asked to wait. I waited for more than an hour before being called. As I had expected, the answer was negative because the border was closed.

While I was getting my petition back and signing some papers I noticed a man watching me curiously. He left his table and went to the exit while I was talking to the girl handling my request.

He was waiting for me at the door. He let me pass then caught up to me near the middle of the block.

"Comrade Sharoff" he addressed me, "I have just examined your petition. Are you by any chance from Ural? Sharoff is a name well



known in those parts".

I replied that my father was a native of Ural but that my family lived in Harbin, Manchuria.

He continued to question me.

"Did not your family have an estate in Ural?"

I said yes and gave him the name of the estate.

Suddenly he relaxed, gave me a Russian smile which stretched from ear to ear and said:

"Well the world is certainly small. I spent the best years of my childhood and youth on your estate. You are probably daughter of Andrew Sharoff. He was the one who went to the Far East".

It was my turn to be astonished as he continued:

"I went to school with his brother. There was not much difference in our ages. We all belong to the same crowd".

"How well I remember summers on the estate, and the hunting and the camp fires. Christmas holidays stand out clearly in my memory - the sleigh rides through the pine woods. Dancing and music in the evenings. There were always many girls in beautiful dresses, so much food and light! I remember the brilliantly lit ballroom. There was always so much beauty gaiety and joy on your old estate".

As he talked, I felt as if I had known him for ages so that when he asked me what had happened to me and what I was doing in Moscow I poured out all my experiences.

He listened with great attention and led me to a bench on the boulevard. When I was through he said:

"We will have to get you back home somehow".

I asked him "How?" for I had just received an answer stating that the border was closed

He smiled and said:

"There is a group of 'underground' youths working for me. They have joined the communist party and are very eager, enthusiastic and resourceful. They will find some way of getting you back to Manchuria. Do not worry. Do not do anything until you hear from us. Go back to Ivano-Vosnesensk and wait for instructions. Be ready to take off at any time".

"How is Andrew?"

I told him that father had died two years ago.

He was sorry but said perhaps it was for the best. It would have been hard for father to adjust to the new government. He took my address and said goodbye. I asked for his name but he replied it would be better if I did not know it. He left, and I went to the library to tell Lissa of this fantastic experience.

On my way I suddenly remembered her words "God has many ways". It now seemed as if I would really go back to Harbin.

When I told Lissa about this new development in my affairs she was just as bewildered as I had been. We decided not to tell anyone about it.

I spent the rest of the day collecting information for the professor. Next morning I left for Ivano-Vosnesensk.

Nanna Masha gave me two large jars of vegetable soup, three hard boiled eggs and freshly baked bread to take back with me.

This was Thursday, December 20th.

I told Nadia only that I might be leaving for Harbin in a few days, as soon as I received the necessary documents.

Next morning I went to the professors office and told him exactly what I had told Nadia. He congratulated me on my success. He also informed me that the Institute would pay me 3,000 roubles for my

three day assignment in Moscow. ( At that time the pre-war value of the Russian rouble had decreased by a factor of atleast  $\times (16 \times 10^3)^{-1}$  .

As I had been warned to be ready to leave at a moments notice I looked over my clothing and decided I would wear one of the cotton dresses for the journey, <sup>with</sup> ~~take~~ my fur coat and hat, and wrap my blanket, pilloewcase and pillow slip in a canvas bag. The rest of my things, including the suitcase I would take to the black market.

I asked Nadia whether she would mind coming to the blackmarket with me, to which she replied there would be no need for the trip as she would like to buy the suitcase for Basil and probably the other girls would like to buy the remainder. She volunteered to ask them and got me 2,000 roubles. For the suitcase she gave me 3,000 roubles - a fair price. It had belonged to my father.

My capital was now 8,300 roubles. I felt like a millionaire.

On Saturday December 22nd I received a letter from the headquarters of the Young Communists. Enclosed was an official statement to the effect that I was delegated by the Committee of the Young Communists to go to Harbin, Manchuria, for propoganda purposes. Also enclosed was a second class ticket and reservation for a berth on a train leaving Moscow for Omsk at 8 a.m. December 24th.

When I boarded the train for Moscow next morning I thought I must be dreaming. Everything happened so quickly and unexpectedly.

This time upon arrival in Moscow I went to see Aunt Elena. She too was glad that I was returning to Manchuria.

I learned from her that the Children's Home was now operating properly. The children were divided into small groups by ages. There were well equipped dormitories, light in all the buildings and

three day assignment in Moscow. At that time the pre-war value of the Russian rouble had decreased at least by a factor of  $(16 \times 10^3)$ . As I had been ready to set off at a moments notice

the nuns were on night duty. Classes were conducted regularly and there were many teachers and leaders for the children.

Leaving her I set off to see Lissa. It was 6 p.m. when I reached the Krasnoff home. The family were in the kitchen - the only heated room in the house - looking over Christmas tree decorations from previous years.

I gave Nanna Masha the meat I had bought on my way and showed Lissa the letter from the Young Communists. Lissa looked at it, then at me, and we both burst out laughing. She passed it on to her husband who also could not suppress a smile as he said:

"Well, this will certainly take you across the country."

Nanna Masha said she would go and mix dough to bake a large ~~meat~~ pie for the family next morning and some small individual ones for me, stuffed with ground meat, onions and chopped hard boiled eggs.

Lissa said she would accompany me to the station and warned Nana Masha that we would take the 7 a.m. Cuckoo train in order to reach the Main Railway station in Moscow by 7.30. Nanna Masha replied that breakfast would be ready by 6a.m.

As planned, Lissa and I were at the Moscow station by 7.30 and were standing ~~in~~ on the platform of the carriage where I had a reserved berth, when a Red Army officer approached us. He asked me to step down as he had a message for me. As I did so he gave me an envelope saying:

"Here is money for your trip. We hope you realize that the documents you have will take you across Russia and the border, but once you enter Manchuria you will be on your own".

I asked how I could return the money and the amount. His answer was:

"You cannot return the money. We will lose track of you when

three day assignment in Moscow. / At that time the pre-war value of  
the Russian rouble had decreased at least by a factor of  $(16 \times 10^3)$  - 7.  
As I had/ been ready to set off at a moments notice

you enter Manchuria. Our organization has lots of paper money which we keep for the purpose of aiding our people to escape from the communist regime if they are able and willing to do it. At present this is the best we can do for Russia". He saluted and left.

More bewildered than ever I returned to Lissa.

A loud whistle warned that the train would depart in ten minutes. It was time for Lissa to leave and for me to go to my berth. It was an upper one; I climbed in and began to look out of the window.

Another whistle and the train began to move.

We were off! For the next two weeks at least there was nothing to worry about. The train would carry me across Central Russia and Ural and bring me to Omsk where I would have to change trains.

I looked through the window as we passed the town and entered snow covered fields. Then my eyes closed and I went to sleep forgetting the present and the past.

I woke up because someone was shaking me vigorously by the shoulder. A small candle set in a lantern above the compartment door did little to dispel the semi darkness.

When my eyes came into focus I saw a small woman standing beside me. She took her hand from my shoulder and said smiling

"If you sleep all day long, what are you going to do at night?" Without waiting for my reply she continued:

"Tovarisch Sergeev and Jukov have gone to get our ration of tea and bread for the night. They will also get yours. As all of us are travelling second class we will all have the same."

"It is too bad you slept so long. At one of the stations about two hours ago there were women selling small pieces filled with buckwheat and mushrooms at 20 roubles each. At any rate come down

As I had been told to be ready to take off at any moment I decided to check on my clothing. I planned to wear one of my cotton dresses when travelling. I would have my fur coat and had and would carry my blanket and pillow in the pillowcase

of the Russian rouble had decreased by at least a factor of three day commission to Moscow (At that time the pre-war value ( 5 ) -1 ( 16 x 10 ) ) .



and have tea with us. I will sell you one of my pies if you like".

As I started to come down she ~~introduced herself saying~~ <sup>said</sup> "I am Maria Antonovna Fedorova. What is your name?"

I gave her mine just as two men between the ages of 30 and 35 entered the compartment bringing hot water, tea leaves and bread.

Maria Fedorova introduced me and turned to make the tea.

In the army canteen Nanna Masha had given me at my departure I found six small pies, three hard boiled eggs and an aluminum mug. I was delighted.

During our meal I learned that my three travelling companions were returning from a teachers convention in Moscow. All three belonged to the communist party. At the end of the meal they began to tell jokes and I went back to sleep.

In the course of our journey to Omsk which took two weeks I found out that my three companions held responsible positions in the field of education.

Tovarisch Jukov was a commissar in the Department of Education. Tovarisch Sergeev ~~was~~ was superintendent of the Omsk grammar school. Maria Antonovna was superintendent of a Childrens Home. To my surprise not one of them had completed grammar school.

Considering the fact that they had little education they were well developed mentally and broad minded. However, they could not compare with Lissa, Professor Krasnoff or Lidia Petrovna Vologina - my psychiatrist at Tomsk. They would certainly have been out of place in my father's library at home where, during his lifetime, there were continuous discussions of world problems, literature, science, philosophy and religion.

All three were very proud of having responsible positions and the

fact that they had been sent as delegates to a convention. I had the impression that they considered themselves very well informed, educated people whereas most of the former teachers had been ignorant.

They were atheists and said that all non-atheists were stupid and uninformed. They considered the Church as the evil of the universe. Their criticism of the Imperial Regime was sharp and to the point. However, the Russian Empire had been very large one. As in any other country there had been many defects, but there were also many leaders in the government who tried to correct the faults. Projects for the building of schools and hospitals in every village were under discussion. Many improvements had been made. For instance, in my childhood, boat haulers were only a legend. Tortures which had existed in the time of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great were but only tales of the past.

As I did not find my three companions very interesting, I spent most of my time in my berth. Locked up in prison, working at the Childrens Home and at the Institute in Ivano Vosnesensk, I had little time for the appreciation of nature. Now, being relaxed and very tired I thirsted for the beauty of the outside world. I would not be interrupted at sun rise or when the change from dusk to darkness took place. During the day, watching the familiar environs, I would doze off

The envelope given to me at the Moscow station contained one million paper roubles, so that I ate much better than I had since leaving Irkutsk.

I must also give credit to Maria Fedorovna who took a special interest in me from the first day of our journey. She always saw to it that I took tea with them, let me know whether there was food for sale at a station. Once she insisted that I buy at least 5 lbs. of salt. She said it was quite probable that paper money would not be

accepted further along the route, but that salt might be desperately needed by the population in which case we could exchange it for food. I took her advice and had cause to be very grateful to her much later.

At one station I exchanged a cup of salt for half a dozen small pies filled with buckwheat and mushrooms. At Ural I got two pounds of pine nuts for one cup of salt, another time a bottle of milk and later a few smoked herring.

One day at the beginning of our trip, when our two male companions were playing cards in another compartment, Maria Fedorovna told me ~~me~~ about ~~xxxxxx~~ her life.

Here is the story of a woman who had been appointed by the Soviet Government to a responsible position in the education of a coming generation in the new Russia.

Maria Fedorovna was the fifth and last child of a baker in a small town in the south of Russia. The children were all two years apart. Their mother died when Maria was five and their father who worked long hours at his bakery hired a housekeeper. She taught Maria housework and cooking.

The other children were all boys. They cut the firewood, brought water to the house from the river etc.

When Maria was seven the boys were sent to a religious school and being talented soon began to learn the art of painting icons.

It was at that time that the bakery got into financial difficulties and the father was forced to let the housekeeper go. Thus Maria began to keep house for her father and four brothers.

At sixteen, through her brothers, Maria became acquainted with a group of young underground workers for the revolution. They were poor but full of life and energy. Maria began to enjoy living. That year

they travelled on the Volga steamer third class for purposes of propoganda.

After the revolution of 1905, when Maria was seventeen, her companions were forced to leave Russia and escaped to the United States. Maria, who had not been involved in the revolution, was left alone. She missed her crowd and became very dissatisfied. Two years later she received a letter from one of her old friends saying that a man living in New York required a Russian housekeeper. He was one of the revolutionaries, was rich and was willing to pay her way to the States if she would be willing to come. Maria accepted immediately, and shortly afterwards left Russia for New York.

She was very happy in the United States for the first two years. Life was different, everything was new to her. At first they lived in New York, then moved to San Francisco in California.

During the third year she became pregnant. Maria not only kept house for her benefactor but also worked in a sewing factory. One day returning from work she found the room empty and a note saying "I have a new job, an important appointment where there is no place for a woman with child. I hope you will be happy without me. Goodbye my ~~fit~~ friend".

Being a communist the man did not believe in marriage. He was her husband in act but not in name.

As Maria was small and thin her pregnancy was very noticeable. One week later she was discharged from the factory.

Some of her friends had just opened a small business making buttons in Pasadena. They needed help and asked Maria to join them. They could not pay much but were willing to give her board and lodging and see her through the pregnancy for her present services. Maria accepted and left with them for Pasadena.

After the baby - a little girl whom she called Ann, arrived, Maria continued to work for her friends taking the child to a day nursery.

She also began to sew dresses and soon had a few customers. She was a talented dressmaker having begun to sew for herself at the age of seven, even making her brothers clothes. She had no trouble copying a dress seen in a store window and became very popular.

She now rented a house of her own, took Ann regularly to the nursery and sewed through the day. She earned well.

After the Russian revolution of 1917 she decided to Return to Russia travelling via Vladivostok, but was forced to stop in Omsk on her way across Siberia because of the civil war.

She obtained a position of dressmaker with the family of a gold mine owner who lived on a large estate near Omsk.

Maria Fedorovna liked her new position, despite the war there was no shortage of food or wine in the house. Little Ann was accepted as a member of the family and ate and played with the other children. Maria Fedorovna had never been among members of the Russian Upper Class. They were friendly, gay and generous.

This came to an end with the collapse of Omsk. The communists confiscated the estate and the owner was imprisoned. Maria Fedorovna went to find another position. She was immediately accepted as a communist who had suffered during the Imperial Regime being forced to leave Russia and go to America. On the strength of this she was given the position of Head Mistress of the Childrens Home.

Maria Fedorovna was very proud of her new position. She wished her brothers knew what she was doing. She enjoyed the convention as she had never been to Moscow before. However, like

everyone else she had been hungry and cold. There was very little communication between the people, they were all afraid of each other. No one talked freely, very few laughed.

She dreamed of the sunshine in Pasadena, longed for the redwood houses nestling among roses and the palm lined streets. Most of all she longed for the friendly people, good food, free speech and laughter. She told me that as soon as she could, she would get a pass to China then escape to Harbin in Manchuria. She was sure that her old customers would help her get back to America.

It was true that Maria Fedorovna had had many experiences, but she was not a leader nor a teacher. She was a nice person and a good worker, but was she a suitable teacher for the new generation?

It dawned on me that one of the biggest problems in Russia was the fact that the people who occupied the responsible posts had not been prepared for it.

On the fourteenth day of our travel we reached Omsk. Saying goodbye to Maria Fedorovna I told her that should she be in Harbin she must come and see me. I said "Although we have only a very small hut, there is always an extra place in it for anyone who needs it and wishes to stay".

At the Omsk station I learned that the train for Irkutsk was expected to depart in two days. On checking my ticket the station master gave me a reservation for a berth in a second class compartment.

Just before I left Moscow, Lissa had told me she had good friends at Omsk. She said:

"If you stop at Omsk, please call on Archbishop Vishnev. He was exiled to Siberia immediately after the revolution. You should remember him. Lialia, his younger daughter Liuba was your friend. You were

neighbours after you and your grandmother returned from Harbin".

I did remember the family and Liuba. She and I used to swing together on a double swing, way high above the trees. I also remembered her sister Vera. She was much older than we were but younger than my aunt Olga or Lissa.

Vera was very liberal and the black sheep of the family. She cut her hair short and wore sports clothes and had gone off to Tomsk in Siberia to study medicine, as it was the first ~~university~~ university to accept women in the School of Medicine.

Lissa said that later Vera became her very close friend. According to her Vera had been a beautiful person, although slightly confused, an idealist from early life. She had died soon after the revolution from typhus which she caught working as a doctor during an epidemic.

Liuba was very different. I believed that Vera probably had much more freedom in her early childhood than Liuba ever had. Since Vera had turned out to be very liberal and inclined toward the revolution, the parents brought up Liuba in a much more conservative manner.

She used to be a very well behaved girl, always scrubbed extra clean, her dresses perfectly starched. She wore a large blue bow on the top of her head setting off her large blue eyes. Her nose was slightly turned up.

I wondered what Liuba was like now. Did she remember me? It was so long ago when we had swung high, high over the tree tops. Certainly I was no longer the girl that had lived in Simbirsk.

I decided to visit Vishnev before doing anything else. It was two o'clock when the train arrived in Omsk, as I was on foot it would

probably take me an hour or two to find them. That would be a proper time for a visit.

My timing was correct. Vishnev lived on the outskirts of the town in a small wooden hut. The mother, Vera Vasilievna Vishnev, opened the door when I knocked. I recognized her although she was very thin and had dark circles ~~around~~ under her eyes.

She let me in and I gave her Lissa's regards. She was very glad to have news of the Krasnoff family and to know they were alive and still living near Moscow. She then asked me who I was.

I told her I was Lialia Sharoff, but that probably she ~~did~~ <sup>would</sup> not remember me. I said "We used to be your neighbours. I played with Liuba. I am the grand daughter of General Lenovski."

Her eyes lit up with pleasure and smiling she said:

"Certainly I remember you. You were Liuba's best friend. She became very ill after you were taken away to Harbin. She never had another friend like you."

Come here to the window where I can see you clearly. I want to know whether I could recognize the little girl that used to bring so much joy to Liuba. Naturally you have grown up. That beautiful time was so long ago.

Sit down, I will prepare tea and you will tell me all about what you are doing in Omsk, the Krasnoff's and what life in Moscow is like".

She set the table and to my surprise brought out some cottage cheese and freshly baked rolls. Pouring the tea she said:

"I am expecting Liuba tomorrow. She is married now and lives on a small estate about 25 miles from Omsk. Her husband is a Commissar and head of an area comprising several villages. Although he is a communist he is a very good man. He is an idealist, yet practical at



the same time. He is very good to Liuba and both of them, Liuba and Anthony - that is his name - are very good to us".

"Liuba married Anthony because of us. After we were deported here we had nothing to eat. We had third type ration cards, there was no firewood, most of our belongings were confiscated. We had our warm clothes and coats - just the ones we wore, and a few blankets. It is much colder here than in Russia, we had nothing to exchange for food. I became very ill."

"Anthony fell in love with Liuba the first time he saw her and promised that if she would marry him he would take care of us, so she agreed. He was an orphan. Now he considers us his parents and as much his responsibility as Liuba is. She is very good to Liuba, he loves her and now she loves him too. She is happy and so are we".

"She will be here tomorrow. He always comes to Omsk once a month and she comes with him to see us."

"Could you stay with us until tomorrow or come back? I know Liuba would be very glad to see you".

I told her that I would stay with pleasure as I had nowhere to go. After I told her my story she insisted that I remain. According to her as long as my ticket had been checked and the reservation confirmed it would be better not to get in touch with the Commissars. She said they had plenty of food as Anthony always brought them both food and fuel from the village.

We were still drinking tea and talking of the past when the front door opened. A tall, lean man stepped across the threshold having left his coat and hat in the small entry. His white beard and mustache were covered with frost. He wore the long black robe of a monk. A golden cross on a golden chain shone on his chest.

Vera Vasilievna turned to him saying:

"Father Seraphim, this is Lialia Sharoff, the grand daughter of General Lenkovski. She will stay with us while waiting for a train".

He replied "It is an honour to have general Lenovski's grand daughter in our humble hut".

He came and blessed me, then said:

"I am very glad to have you with us my child".

This man who had been the Archbishop of Simbirsk felt no bitterness nor dismay. Love and serenity flowed from him. He conducted services in a small wooden church. Its bells had been silenced and no longer called the congregation to prayer. Father Seraphim served without any pay, braving prosecution. He gave hope and consolation to those who needed and searched for it. He shared everything he had with his neighbours and his flock, and they responded to it.

That evening Vera Vasilievna and Father Seraphim made up my bed out of two trunks in the kitchen, just as they prepared it every month for Liuba. The head of the bed was in the right corner of the room where the icons had been placed.

As I lay down I felt the warmth of the small hut and it was very small, only the bedroom almost completely filled by the double bed and the small kitchen with two windows overlooking the snow covered yard.

Warmth spread through every corner, penetrating deep inside. It was not that of the fire built in the kitchen stove, but rather the warmth of the occupants of the hut, warmth which was manifest in every word and every motion of Father Seraphim and Vera Vasilievna.

A small blue votive light placed before the icon of the Blessed Mary with the Infant Jesus, softly twinkled above my head.

I closed my eyes and suddenly felt grandfather's arms around me.

felt his kiss on my forehead and his beard tickling my nose. In my sleep I knew that I was secure and there was nothing to fear because my grandfather~~ix~~ was near.

The smell of freshly baked bread woke me. Vera Vasilievna was busy near the stove. The table was set. We had cottage cheese and ~~with~~ blueberry buns and tea for breakfast.

Vera Vasilievna said she, Liuba and Anthony had picked the blueberries in the woods the previous summer and had dried them in the sun.

To her great disappointment Anthony came alone this time. He thought it was too cold for Liuba to travel such a long distance as the temperature was 45 C below zero.

I told my hostess I had three and a half pounds of salt with me which I would like to share with her, but she refused my offer. She suggested that I should exchange it for butter because salt was needed in Omsk and butter in Irkutsk. She asked a neighbour to do this for me and he brought back three pounds of butter and four smoked herrings as Vera Vasilievna thought it would be practical to take the herring with me on the train.

Two days later I left for Irkutsk and was lucky enough to get an upper berth again.

Vera Vasilievna had given me a basket of provisions in which I found half a dozen small pies filled with dried mushrooms and buckwheat, half a dozen cottage cheese and blueberry buns, half a dozen hard boiled eggs and my four herring.

For another three or four weeks I had nothing to worry about, just rest and sleep.



I should mention here that after I left Ivano-Vosnesensk, I had no further bladder trouble.

After Irkutsk the other passengers in my compartment travelled short distances only and were continuously replaced by others, so that I was not in close touch with any of them. For the most part I remained in my berth looking through the window or sleeping.

For me, the train was the best place in which to rest and slowly I began to regain strength and energy.

Three weeks later we reached Irkutsk where the temperature was -47 C.

At the station I was informed that I would have to buy a ticket for Chita and must have a permit from the Commissar to do so.

I decided to visit the Vanbergs.

As I approached their house I saw two Red soldiers leaving it while a third one entered. This put me on guard and I hesitated, then seeing an old man sweeping the yard next door I stopped and asked him about the Vanbergs.

He recognised me, looking around cautiously he whispered.

"The house was searched the day after you left. Your three companions were arrested and taken to prison. A week later there was another search, but the house was empty. Mr. Vanberg's old horse and wagon had disappeared a few days earlier. No one has seen him or his family since. The Red soldiers are now in occupation".

He paused for a second then added:

"The old fox knows his way about and has many friends in the villages in this region. He is probably out of the country by now."

He began to sweep again and told me to move on.

I went to see the Commissar. He took one look at my assignment and calmly declared:

"This document is false. You are deserting Russia".

Just as calmly I stated:

"This document was issued to me by the Communist party in Moscow assigning my duties".

"It is the headquarters of all Communist Parties in Russia. All you have to do to verify my document is to send a telegram to Moscow. If you do not do so, I will. I assure you that party members in Moscow will not be too pleased if I am delayed. You might as well know that many of the Commissars in Irkutsk are on the black list of Moscow Headquarters."

Blood rushed to his face. He banged his fist on the table. Then controlling his voice he said:

"If you are from the headquarters in Moscow, why bother me?"

A new law has been in effect for the past few days. Every delegate, according to this regulation, must be provided with sufficient funds at the place of his assignment, to purchase his own ticket if it is necessary and have sufficient money for his food.

If you are a delegate from Moscow you must have been given enough money to buy your ticket from Irkutsk to Chita. You should even have been given enough gold to buy your transportation from Chita to Harbin".

I stood my ground and replied:

"I have all that. I came here only to find out the address of the place where I am to stay this week while waiting for the train."

His face changed suddenly. A crooked smile twisted his lips. He looked like a cat which had swallowed the canary as he said:

"Well, we are very very crowded, but let me see what I can do for you. Ah, here it is. I am sure you will be pleased with your lodging.

Giving me the address he added:

"Do not go there until 8 o'clock tonight. There will be no vacancies before that time and you will not be admitted, but by 8 o'clock your bed will be ready. According to our regulations no one should go to a lodging house until there is a vacancy."

I took the address and left without replying. I was afraid that any additional word or motion would show my bluff.

It was after 4 p.m. when I left the office and dusk was descending over the town. Regardless of the Commissars last injunction I decided to go to my lodging immediately. It was very cold, the station too far away, and furthermore, remembering the night riders, I was afraid of remaining on the streets after dark. I thought I would explain the situation to the manager and ask for permission to remain somewhere in the house until 8 p.m.

The place to which I had been directed proved to be a small military barrack with two entrances. When I knocked, a tall slender man let me into an entry and looked at me inquisitively.

I told him that I was on my way to Chita and had been assigned this lodging. He replied:

"There must have been a mistake, we have no vacancy. Who sent you here?"

As I explained and repeated what the Commissar had said about no vacancy until 8 p.m., his face became stern and he exclaimed:

"The swine! The dirty swine!" Then added "Excuse me pleaseXX, I lost my temper. Come into the room where it is warmer".

I saw three rows of beds, five to a row. All but one were occupied by men. They all rose as we entered.

The man escorting me said:

"Please do not worry. No one will harm you here. We will move a bed into the corner and make a screen of blankets so you will have

privacy."

"There are a few dissident members in the Communist party."

"I promise you will be safe here and we will see that you get on the train for Chita".

"Under the circumstances it will be best for you to remain here while awaiting the train. You cannot go back to see the commissar again and you certainly can not live at the station or roam the streets.

"Please do not worry about your ration. We have enough food for an extra person. The caretaker, who is also the manager, has a small apartment next door. His wife cooks our meals. Our supper should be here in about half an hour. You are probably hungry and tired. Lie down and rest on my bed while I attend to your private corner".

He left me and went to talk to some other men. They began to hang up blankets while I lay down. I was tired and hungry as I had not eaten since the previous night.

My corner was ready just before the meal was brought in.

The men moved four beds to form a square, setting a card table in the middle. Each man had his own bowl and spoon. They found an extra one for me.

The manager put a large bowl of cabbage and beef soup and a basket of bread on the table. The men added French rolls. The soup smelled delicious.

During the meal I learned that this was a men's dormitory for chief engineers only.

The men were indignant at the commissar's action. They said it was incredible that a young woman should be sent to a men's dormitory, particularly to be told to get there at 8 p.m. when he knew the men would be in bed as there was nothing else to do in Irkutsk after that hour. They also pointed out that because of the *night riders* no one



was safe in the streets after 8 p.m.

They again assured me that no harm would come to me and I would be safe with them.

The man who opened the door for me was a civil engineer called Peter Petrovich Maximov.

While we were eating he told me the following tale

"All of us here are engineers, heads of one project or another. We are delayed here because of mismanagement and corruption. We all know each other well because we were all in prison in the cause of the revolution.

"I am chief engineer in charge of the construction of a new railroad between Irkutsk and Yacutsk. Our equipment was confiscated in the middle of nowhere. Some of my men have been arrested because the Commissar of a small neighbouring town does not need the railroad. He wants us to rebuild the town for him!"

"In vain I tried to explain that we were instructed by Moscow to build a railroad and are not free to change our assignment. The man only laughed and said Moscow was far away and I was the boss here.

"I was forced to return to Irkutsk and contact Moscow because I received no co-operation. Now, because of the snow, I can not get in touch with my group and must wait until the ~~roads~~ thaw.

"The other men are here because of similar circumstances.

"For one reason or another, the commissars of a town or village have confiscated their equipment and will not allow them to carry out their assignments. Mismanagement and corruption among the members of the new government delay progress and bring starvation and discouragement to the population.

"All of us have worked for the revolution. As students we joined the underground communist party. We dreamed of hospitals and schools

in every village. We wanted justice for all. All this had already been planned by the Imperial Government and its members were working to accomplish these goals, but progress takes time and we were impatient."

"We ~~had~~ <sup>were</sup> engineers working on assignments, the future looked bright, when, because of the revolt in which we took part, we were sent to Siberia. Here in prison we continued to carry on propoganda, we continued our underground work. Finally the revolution took place. We were released from prison and so too were criminals, murderers and bandits."

"We had spent the best years of our life in prison because we wanted justice for all. We had been working for it, and the result of our efforts was massacre and streams of blood pouring over our beloved Russia".

"The brain, the cream of Russia was executed. People who apparently had no concept of political economy became the rulers of Russia. They killed private enterprise - the basic principle<sup>le</sup> of Socialism"

"Corruption and mismanagement became the rule of the new government.

"Most of the Russian population is starving, most of the people are under such pressure of fear that they can not even revolt".

"It is bitter for a man to realise that he is partly responsible for the ruin of the country he loves".

After the meal we continued to sit on the same beds. The men spoke of their past, their dreams for Russia and the revolution. They now had very little hope for the future.

By the end of the evening I was well acquainted with my new companions, their ideals and principles. I knew I would be safe with them.

My week's stay proved me right in my estimate of them. The men

in the dormitory were well educated, very intelligent and interesting companions. It was their custom to sit after meals discussing world problems, political economy, revolution, present and past conditions, etc. They had carried this tradition on from their university years and had kept it up through long years of imprisonment.

Peter Petrovich, because he had been the longest in Irkutsk and a born leader became the manager of the group. He considered himself in charge and responsible for every member, including me.

The day after my arrival Peter Petrovich asked me whether I had enough money to buy my ticket to Chita, I had not kept track of the money I had spent on food because I did not expect to have to pay for my ticket and told him I would have to count up my funds. I also told him about the three pounds of butter and he assured me that this alone would be enough for my ticket. I explained I was not sure of the commissar's permission to buy a ticket.

He smiled, saying

"That is one of the advantages of staying with us. We do not have to have the commissar's authorization for our actions."

"The caretaker of this place looks after us. He arranges our travelling, gets our passes and tickets, makes our appointments, takes care of our mail etc. It is taken for granted that anyone staying in this dormitory has high priority. Although we do not have any co-operation from the Commissar, he usually leaves us alone".

"The caretaker also buys us food on the black market. I will give him your butter to sell."

"Some of the men are leaving Irkutsk next week. He will get their tickets and make reservations. He will do it for you at the same time. It is just routine for him. He never asks questions.

I asked Peter Petrovich whether it was correct that I would need gold to buy my ticket from Chita to Station Manchuria on the Manchurian border. He confirmed this saying that Russian paper money was only good within the limits of Communist Russia. Chita was the capital of the Far Eastern Republic. Gold or silver coins were required by the railway. Apparently my worry and disappointment showed in my face because Peter Petrovich smiled at me saying:-

"Cheer up, Chita is a much more reasonable place than Irkutsk. Sorry I am unable to help you there, but something will turn up. You have done pretty well 'so far".

He advised me not to go out but remain in the dormitory continuously until the time of my departure. I told him I would have been glad to do so if I did not have to go and visit the boys in prison. He replied that it would be very risky, but as I insisted, promised to try and get information on the situation and visiting hours. Next day he told me that he would escort me to the prison and back to the dormitory.

Peter Petrovich remained at the prison gate while I was taken to see the boys.

There was no visiting room. I was taken along the corridor of the prison with a row of cells made of iron bars stretching on either side. I saw Peter Andreiev in one of these cells lying on one of three beds, the other two were empty.

As the guard and I stopped he rose and the guard left us. I was not admitted into the cell but left outside the bars. Peter was much thinner. His boyish appearance was there no longer. He was unshaved. A small beard and mustache covered his face. His eyes were very sad. They lit up a little when he saw me.

He told me that all three of them had been arrested the day

after I left Irkutsk. They had been accused of being sympathizers of the counter revolutionary movement and sentenced to two years in prison.

The three of them were placed in this cell. Two months earlier David had died from typhus. Ten days ago Eugene also came down with the illness and three days had been taken unconscious to the prison hospital. The guard had told Peter that morning that Eugene was still unconscious and not expected to live.

Peter said he had not heard anything from the Vanbergs after arrest.

He was very glad to know that I was on my way back to Harbin and asked me to tell his parents he was alive and expected to be home by Fall. He explained he had been promised a pardon for good behaviour in three months time.

He said:

"As soon as I am out of here I will start back home, on foot if necessary".

Before I left I asked if there was anything I could do, could I give him money or send some food? He shook his head saying:

"No, I do not need anything. I do not want to risk losing my pardon. I am not allowed to have more than two roubles on hand, but if you have an extra two roubles for cigarettes I would greatly appreciate having some. I am very lonely by myself, time drags and cigarettes help to pass the time."

He said he was very grateful to me for coming, at least he knew now that he was not forgotten, however he suggested that I should not visit him again because it was too risky for me. He said:

"Leave Irkutsk as soon as possible. While you are here stay

in your room and do not go out".

Visiting time was over. The guard took me back to the gate where Peter Petrovich waited. I was very glad to have him as an escort.

A few days later I left for Chita.

At Peter Petrovich's suggestion I gave the manager 10,000 roubles asking him to buy provisions for my trip. On opening the basket I found a pound of dry salami, three smoked herring, a dozen small pies filled with meat and onions, another dozen filled with buckwheat and mushrooms, six French rolls, two pounds of pine nuts and a dozen hardboiled eggs. I had an issue of barley coffee and bread as my ration twice a day.

This time most of my travelling companions were soldiers going short distances. As once again I had an upper berth no one bothered me. I spent most of my time there, looking through the window, dreaming of the past and analysing what had happened to me since I left Harbin.

Ten days later we reached Chita.

At the station I found out that the train for Manchuria was due to leave in half an hour's time, the next one being seven or eight days later. I also found to my dismay that it was essential to have silver or gold coins to buy a ticket for Manchuria.

Russian paper money was useless in Chita and in any case only a few roubles remained from my million.

I did not dare to contact the department of Transport. I doubted I would get gold for my ticket without a certificate from Moscow.

I could sell my karakul cap, as I had mentioned previously, it was a valuable one, but I doubted my commercial abilities. Furthermore I would be obliged to remain in Chita for at least a week, which

raised the question of lodging.

I decided to board the train as soon as possible without a ticket. So far, tickets had been checked by the conductor after the train left a station, if the same procedure was to be followed again, I would be on my way to Manchuria and it seemed to me that it would be easier to talk to the train conductor than to bluff the Commissar of Transport.

As I had my documents stating that I had been posted to Harbin, Manchuria, it would appear logical that I would have a ticket also. I could tell the conductor that I had lost it and then try to bribe him with my cap, coat, blankets and pillow to allow me to stay on the train. If I failed, I would be put off the train at some small station 30 or 50 miles away from Chita. In which case, I reasoned, I would ~~sixty miles~~ be that much closer to the border.

At the small station I could once again try to persuade some member of the railway personnel to put me onto a train for Manchuria in exchange for all my possessions, even if it was a goods train.

Without any further hesitation I boarded and, since my documents stated I was to travel second class, I entered a second class compartment occupied by three soldiers who said I could have one of the lower berths.

All three were typical Russian soldiers, blond, blue eyed and snub nosed. All three had wind chapped faces.

I remembered grandfather's words:

"A soldier is your brother, If you are in trouble, go to a soldier".

I spoke to them and found out that they had been assigned to the border. They were friendly. I told them I had been assigned to Manchuria and showed them my document, then I asked when the conductor

collected tickets. One of them replied that it was usual for the conductor to check tickets shortly after the train left the station and collect them just before the border.

It was late evening and one of the soldiers said that if I was tired and wanted to rest, I could give him my ticket and he would show it to the conductor without waking me up.

This was my cue. I said:

"Oh no, when the conductor comes to check the tickets I ~~won't~~ will look the other way and without looking at him ~~won't~~ <sup>will</sup> give him my cap instead of the ticket. If he rejected it, I ~~won't~~ shall give him my coat. If he does not accept it, I will give him my bag containing my blanket and pillow. If he still does not take it, I will agree that he will have to put me off at the next station."

I laughed while I talked and demonstrated my speech with actions. Laughter is contagious and the soldiers laughed with me.

Our friendly relationship was well established by the time the train gave its first whistle announcing in ten minutes time.

Suddenly one of the soldiers became serious. He asked me:

"Tovarisch, are you serious or are you only joking? It is better not to talk this way. You might be arrested for attempting to bribe the conductor".

I told him I was serious. I explained that I had left Moscow when <sup>only</sup> a pass ~~only~~ was necessary to board a train. After my departure a new law had come into effect according to which I had to buy a ticket. I said:

"I have no gold on hand. My first contact will be someone in Manchuria from whom I am supposed to receive currency used in Manchuria. The Department of Transport in Chita would have to contact Moscow



before giving me the required gold coins. It would take months to get a reply and I should be on duty as soon as possible".

As I finished, one of the soldiers said:

"That is the trouble with our government - too much red tape. It might take years to get somewhere, there is always some kind of a misunderstanding".

He stopped talking and looked at me steadily for a few minutes. Then he said:

"It would be much simpler if you were to lie down under the berth. We will cover you with our belongings. We have done it before".

"You will only have to stay there while the conductor is in the car, and he will be here only while checking the tickets, that is for about half an hour after the train leaves. He will come again about 23 hours later to collect the tickets, just before the train reaches the border. The rest of the time you can occupy this berth. Would you like to do this?"

I did not hesitate even for a second, said "yes" and climbed under the berth. The soldiers covered me with their belongings. The train gave a second whistle and began to move. I was on my way to Manchuria!

A few minutes later the compartment door opened. A man in civilian clothes entered. It was not the conductor. He asked the soldiers whether the fourth berth was vacant as he wished to occupy it. They replied that it was occupied by a woman. The man was not satisfied and wanted to know where the woman was.

Finally one of the soldiers took him out to see if they could find the occupant.

As soon as they left, one of the soldiers locked the compartment

door and lowering his head to me whispered:

"Tovarisch, we are in trouble. This man is from the Cheka. He insists on remaining in this compartment. Our companion took him out to look for another vacant berth so ~~ix~~ as to give us a chance to warn you. Please be very careful. If he finds you we will all go to jail. We do not know where he is going, as soon as it is safe we will let you know."

"Here, have this cup of tea and bread while he is out. You may not have another opportunity to eat until we reach the border."

I thanked him but refused the offer. I preferred to have an empty stomach if I had to remain under the berth for 24 hours.

A few minutes later the soldier and the Cheka man returned.

Two of the soldiers now occupied the lower berths, the third immediately jumped up on the upper berth opposite me, leaving the upper one above me to the Cheka man.

Very soon afterwards the conductor came in to check the tickets and went on his way again.

It was around 10 p.m. For a little while I heard the low voices of the soldiers, then gentle snores. I was reasonably safe until the morning, but did not dare to go to sleep for fear of making a noise. I dozed a little through the long night hours.

It was already light when the hot water and bread were brought in. The Cheka man, yawning loudly, got down from his berth and went out. Immediately a head was lowered from the berth above me and a voice asked:

"How are you down there?"

I replied I was fine. The voice then told me that the Cheka man was going right to the border and apologised for not giving me any

breakfast at present as they did not dare to do so.

I said I was fine and there was nothing to worry about. The head disappeared and a few minutes later the Cheka man was back in the compartment.

The soldiers let him sit on the berth above me. He was so close I could have put my arms around his legs had I wished.

After breakfast the soldiers organized a card game. The Cheka man played with them. Time dragged for me lying on my back, afraid to move, afraid to sneeze.

Darkness settled over the compartment. The small candle in the lantern above the door was lit. Finally the conductor came in and collected the tickets. We were approaching the border.

The Cheka man stepped out. The soldiers began to remove their belongings saying:

"Tovarisch, you can get out now. We have tea and bread for you. You are safe now".

I asked where the Cheka man had gone.

One of the soldiers replied:

"There is nothing to fear any longer. We are at the international zone. In about fifteen minutes we will be at the Manchurian border."

"You will have to change trains, but no tickets are required. Only a permit for crossing the border is necessary. You will be escorted to the train and in a couple of hours you will be at station Manchuria."

They gave me tea, bread and a lump of sugar.

The Cheka man returned to the compartment. Looking suspiciously at my rumpled dress and disordered hair he asked the soldiers:

"Where did she come from?"

Grinning at him they replied "We told you there was a woman. Yo

did not believe us and occupied her berth. Now you see that we had told you the truth", after which they ignored him, and helped me with my belongings.

The train stopped but there was no station. The doors of the railroad cars were locked. The soldiers explained that passengers were let out one by one and only from one car at a time.

When my turn came I stopped down. The Russian inspector looked at my pass exclaiming:

"What kind of a fool gave you this pass? You will be arrested in Manchuria/ Do you have other papers to show the inspector on the Manchurian side of the border?"

I told him I had my passport.

He said it was not sufficient and suggested I should leave the train before reaching Station Manchuria to avoid legal entry.

I said I would follow his advice.

I had no intention of jumping from the train. At Station Manchuria I would be on my own railroad. It did not occur to me that the railway was not our's any longer.

At station Manchuria a passport inspector took me inside the building. A chinese behind a high desk looked at me suspiciously while handling my papers. Instead of returning the documents to me he said:

"You claim to be the daughter of Mr. Andrew Sharoff. Do you know that your cousin is employed with us?"

I nodded and he continued:

"In that case, you will not mind if we call him?"

I looked at the clock above his head. It was 1.45 a.m.

I said "He is probably in bed now. You may call him in the morning".



soon as possible.

It was after 6 a.m. when Galina finally let us in to her house. She took one look at me and told me to get into the bath tub. She brought me one of her night gowns, a warm bathrobe and a pair of soft slippers. After I had had a bath she sent me to bed and brought me my breakfast on a tray. It consisted of a cheese and ham omlet with a slice of ham on the side, bread, butter, jam and hot tea.

She sat beside me but told me not to talk until later. For the present I was to eat and then go to sleep.

I slept for 24 hours, not even dreaming.

Galina woke me by bringing in another tray. She said it was time to eat, I could go back to sleep after the meal.

This time she brought me four small meat pies and a pot of hot tea. Bread, butter jam and sugar were also on the tray.

Galina told me that Alexis had already ordered my ticket for Harbin and it would be ready in a couple of days, she then asked if I would like to tell her of my experiences in Russia.

I was not in the mood for that. Instead I asked about conditions in Manchuria.

According to Galina life there was not as good as it had been. There were too many Chinese now among the railway officials. There was no feeling of security. For the time being neither Russia, Japan or China wanted to fight each other for possession of Manchuria so it was temporarily under so called "White" Russian rule, but any one of the three countries ~~might~~ would probably take Manchuria over at the first opportunity. A revolt of the Chinese population against Russian rule was expected at any time. These were the general conditions.

Galina's personal life had also been affected. Like most of the

Russians in Manchuria, Galina and Alexis lost their savings with the devaluation of Russian roubles. Her oldest sister with a two year old baby and her youngest sister had escaped from Russia and were now living with Galina. All three were undernourished and required medical care and medicine, which was very expensive.

Eve, Galina's youngest sister was 12 years old and went to Grammar School. Galina's own son, had also started to go, and schools were just as expensive as the doctors.

Galina had dismissed all her servants with the exception of one whom she kept for doing the heavy household chores. He was doing her own cooking, her older sister was keeping the house clean with the assistance of Eve.

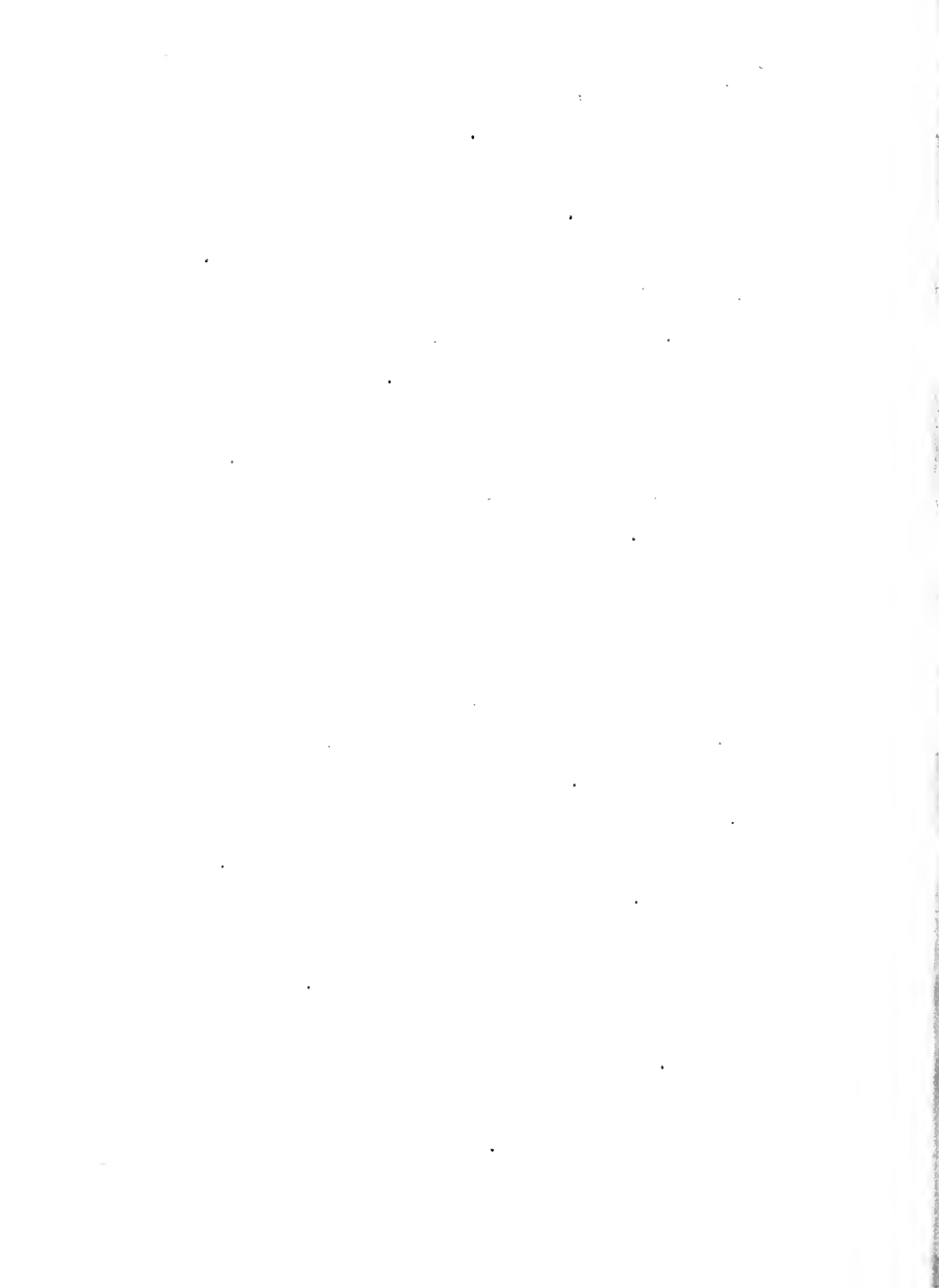
So far they had been managing, but the cost of living was increasing rapidly while the wages paid by the railway remained unchanged.

I now realized that conditions in Manchuria had changed and there was no security for any Russian, but I was too tired to worry about the future. I was glad to have a warm bed, clean sheets and good meals for the present. I went back to sleep before Galina had finished her story.

My ticket arrived from Harbin on the third day. As usual it was a first class one. As usual Alexis reserved a two berth first class compartment for me and insisted that the upper berth be kept down so that I could have the compartment for myself.

Galina filled a food basket for me and gave me ten Chinese dollars for incidentals.

Thirty six hours after boarding the train I was back in Harbin without any further incidents.





Frocia met me at the station. We caught the commuter train to Old Harbin.

It seemed to me as if years and years had passed since I was last on this train, since I had left Harbin.

On our way home Frocia brought me up to date on events at home. Natasha was attending the new Medical School which had just been opened in Harbin. She was very busy but would come and see me on her first free day, next Saturday.

Serge was away bear hunting, he very rarely stayed home, but supplied the family with fresh game.

Mother was preoccupied with the orphanage and refugee problems, as usual. She too was very seldom home.

I listened absentmindedly to Frocia's description of the familiar tempo of our home life. I could not fully comprehend that I was back in Harbin.

A cold sharp wind was blowing as we walked along the ~~familiar~~ well known path to Tania's cottage. The elm trees moaned bending their mighty branches under the strong pressure of the wind. There was no snow and the dry leaves crackled and rustled under our feet.

Frocia had made up my bed on my favourite couch in the front room. I went to bed immediately and stayed there for two weeks, just sleeping and eating. Frocia took care of me.

Two weeks later I began to look around me. I did not like what I saw. There was nothing for me to do in Harbin.

The city was swamped by refugees from Russia who had no money and no work. Bitter poverty and starvation were prevalent among the newcomers, and especially acute among the former officers of the Russian Imperial Army.

They lived on the outskirts of the town where a row of military barracks had been quickly and badly built for them. Here the officers, some wounded, some amputees all of them starving, dragged out their existence. They had no money, no food, no firewood and no work. Most of them were graduates ~~from~~ <sup>of</sup> the military academy who had gone straight to the ~~front~~ <sup>war</sup>. Others were from grammar schools. Upon graduating they had been given a quick military course and also sent into battle. War had been their only experience, they knew no other life. Now the war was over and they found themselves on the side that had lost and out of place.

In addition to the serious refugee problems there were others. Harbin residents feared a Chinese revolt. They also feared that at any moment China, Russia or Japan would take over Manchuria. As usual, they tried to hide their fears in ~~extraneous~~ feverish gaiety, women and wine. Most of the population was trying to get out of Manchuria, or at least send their children out.

Special groups had been organized who had contact with the Y.M.C.A. in the United States. These organizations dealt with passages, permits, passports etc. for Manchurian students wishing to go to America, but all this required money.

In Harbin there was the medical school. It was very expensive. I had no money, neither had Mother after paying Natasha's tuition. Besides, I had no interest in medicine. My field was different, even though I considered that any branch of science would bring me closer to my goal. I did not trust the organizers of this school. They were the same people who had staffed our grammar school and even though the teaching staff consisted of refugees from Russia, I doubted the administration.

The longer I pondered, the clearer it became that any institution I might choose would be out of my reach financially, therefore it did not make too much difference, which I chose. I would have to rely on my own physical and mental resources to get into any institution of higher education.

As the University of Calcutta, India, appeared to me to be the most attractive, my problem was reduced to reaching that city.

Quite unexpectedly I suddenly remembered Yuri Michailovich who had stayed with my parents while organizing an expedition into the back blocks of China and Tibet. I believe ~~perhaps~~ it was during my first visit to Harbin in 1906 or 1907.

His group consisted of four men. They had three donkeys with them to carry their belongings and the strings of Chinese "Cash", <sup>copper</sup> -/coins of small denominational value with square holes in the center - which were the only acceptable currency in the regions they were proposing to enter.

A year or two later Yuri Michailovich was back with us in Harbin, so was I. Vaguely I remembered his tales of majestic temples, pagodas and cloisters built high on rocky mountain ledges above precipices. Faintly the stories of strange and beautiful customs of the natives came to mind.

Yuri Michailovich said the natives were friendly and hospitable, especially the monks. In any monastery pilgrims would be sure to find shelter and food.

Finally it dawned on me that if Yuri Michailovich could get to Tibet on foot, so could I. True it was a long time since he had made the trip, but between 1900 and 1920 places like Tibet and China's hinterland had not changed much.

I decided to organize a small group of between five and ten persons to go on foot to Calcutta across Tibet.

Most of the refugees in Harbin were educated, intelligent people, most were starving and had nothing to do. I hoped that there would be a few adventurers among them who would prefer an expedition to Calcutta to starvation in Harbin.

I assumed that on our journey every member of the group would pursue some study, either of the customs and religion of the natives, geographical structure of the region, wild life etc. in whatever direction the interest of any particular member lay.

For funds I was considering a communal money box with each member of the expedition putting in what he could afford.

At the time I was hammering out this project, my uncle came to the cottage to see Serge. He was a mining engineer, a refugee from Ural where he had been the head of a German mining region. Upon the approach of the Communists, he had organized means of escape for himself and most of his workers by seizing a train and a million roubles in gold. Upon arriving in Harbin he intended to build a factory to provide employment for his workers.

He had come to ask Serge to try and locate quartz veins for him. He expected Serge to do this while hunting and was willing to pay \$100.00 (Chinese) for the service.

He intended to build a glass factory but did not wish to spend too much money on preliminary investigations as he had the workers to support as well as the expense of the building and equipment.

Serge was not at home, but I told my uncle I could do the job for him.

Next day I went to Shitohadze and stayed for a few days with the Ostapoffs. I knew the region well and had no difficulty in locating the quartz layers.

I had earned a hundred dollars which I considered to be the initial capital for my expedition.

From General Vat I obtained ~~x~~ military maps of China from which I plotted our route. I decided we should follow the Yellow River by boat across China, which would bring us almost to the foothills of Tibet, and from there we would travel on foot. General Vat had promised to arrange free transportation as far as the Yellow River for my group.

I put an advertisement in the newspapers and one on every bulletin board of every refugee organization.

While awaiting results I was temporarily employed in the branch of the Russian-Chinese orphanage in Old Harbin. This had originally been designed for infants, however <sup>some had now</sup> ~~they~~ had grown to the age of ten and were still in the same institution.

The place was small, there were five nurses for the small children and three of us, i.e. the supervisor, a refugee student and myself to take care of children between the ages of six and ten. We had only about thirty children under our supervision.

I received fifteen Chinese dollars per month and my room and board. I used the money to replenish my wardrobe as I had no clothes upon my return to Harbin. Frocia made me a few dresses.

I met Tatiana a few times during that period. We were poles apart. She still hated her work and was now a member of Harbin's bohemian society, the society she had criticized so sharply in her poems about the daily life in Harbin, when she was twelve.

I had neither the clothes, the time nor the money to spend at her parties and they did not interest me.

Time passed.

Two refugee officers answered my advertisement. They were interested in Tibet. I suggested they should try and recruit another two or three

people and we should then be ready to start our expedition.

Two weeks later they returned saying "If you will pay each of us one hundred Chinese dollars we will accompany you".

I took their reply as an insult and felt very discouraged as I foresaw the difficulty of selecting members for the expedition. I realized I could not go by myself.

As soon as the officers left I contacted mother and asked her for information about a group of students who were planning to go to the United States. She was able to tell me that they were planning to leave in a few days time. Transportation from Vladivostok to San Francisco was \$150.00 (Chinese) per person. I asked if she could lend me fifty dollars. She replied that she would try and sell the rug from father's library to the friends who had been using it. She then suggested that I should go to the meeting of the group to be held that night.

At the meeting I learned that the students were leaving very shortly and that I could join them provided I could get an entry visa by Wednesday night. This was Monday, and they were leaving Thursday morning.

I assumed that I would still have a free pass to Vladivostok, and I was right. On Tuesday morning Mother said I could have the fifty dollars so I went to see the American consul where I was informed that I could get an entry visa to the United States within 24 hours provided I could supply them with proper recommendations.

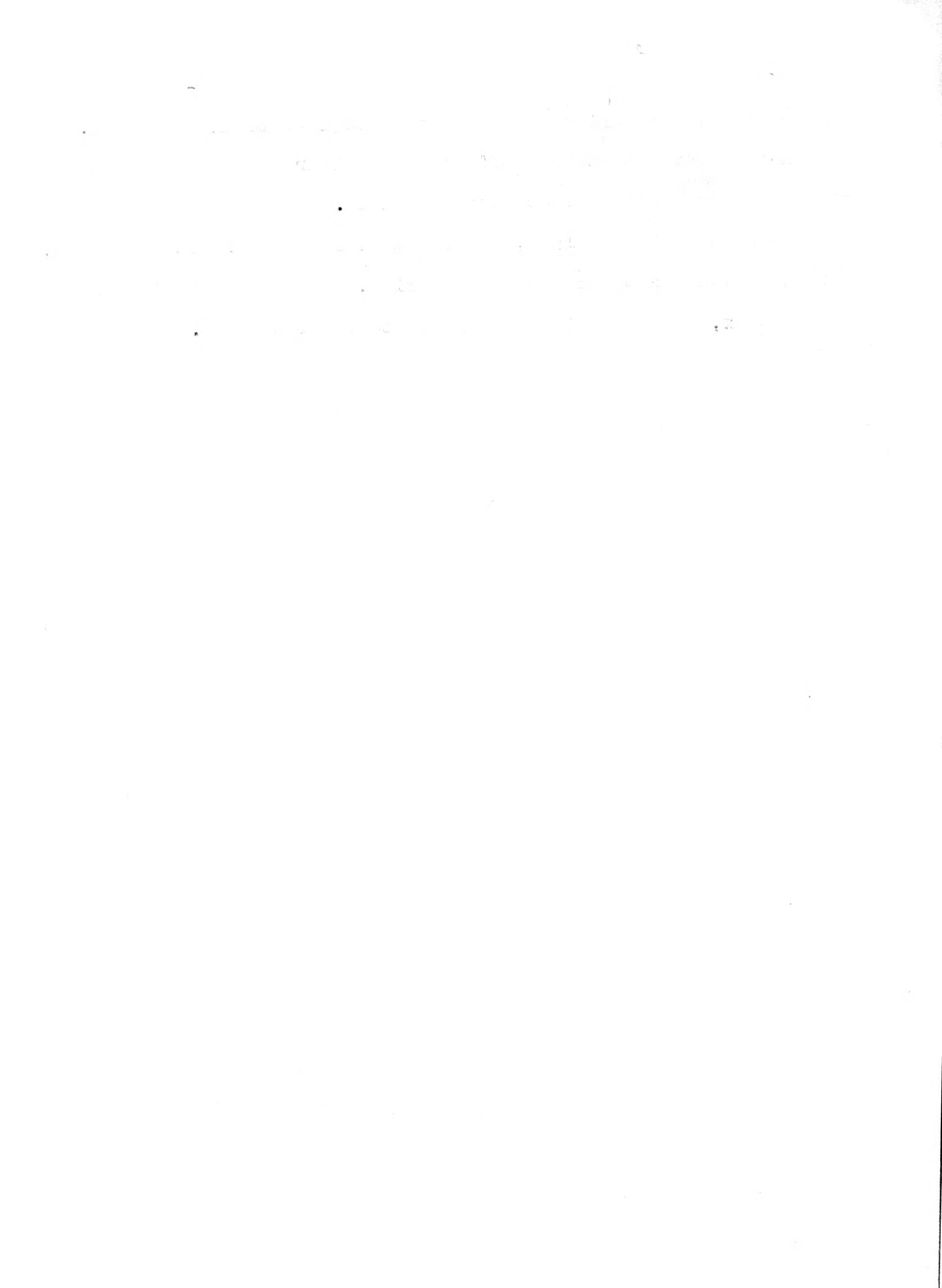
I had no difficulty in obtaining these from representatives of the Russia-Chinese railway company. The memory of my father was still fresh among them.

By Wednesday afternoon my visa was ready. Frocia packed my food

hamper with my favourite dishes, enough to last to Vladivostock.

Mother gave me three extra Chinese dollars suggesting that I do not spend them until I reach San Francisco.

Thus on September 15th, 1922, with three dollars in my pocket, without knowing a single word of English, I boarded a train for Vladivostok, on my way to the United States of America.

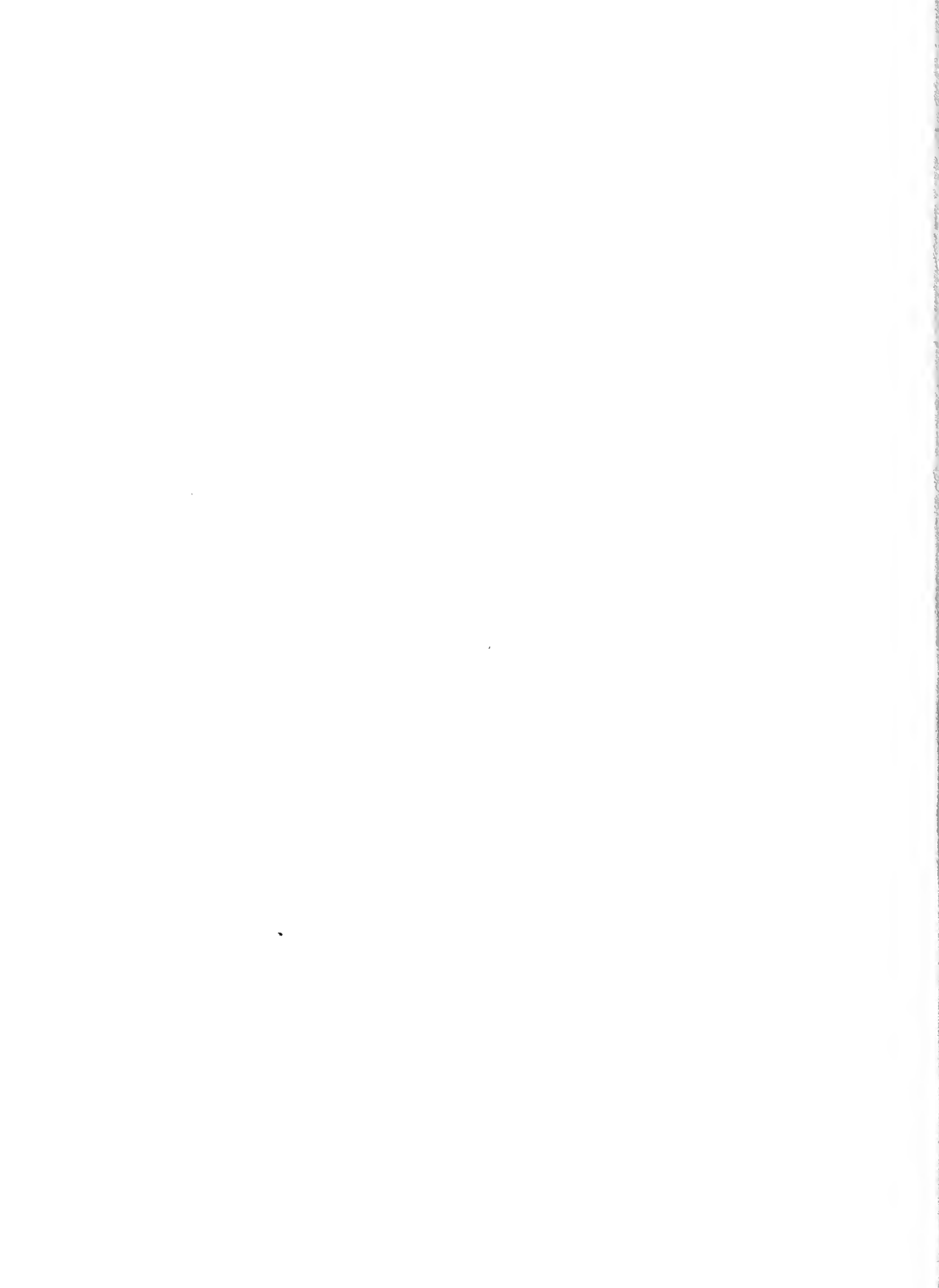












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